

RURAL ENGLAND

'BEING AN ACCOUNT OF
AGRICULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCHES CARRIED
OUT IN THE YEARS 1901 & 1902

BY

H. RIDER HAGGARD

'I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man
than the golden wedge of Ophir.'—ISAIAH

'The highways were unoccupied . . . the inhabitants of the
villages ceased.'—JUDGES

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II.

WITH 29 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

NEW EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1906

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RURAL ENGLAND

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CAMBRIDGESHIRE is one of the smaller English counties, comprising an area of about 549,000 acres, with a greatest length of fifty and a greatest breadth of about thirty miles. The Fenland, known generally as the Bedford Level, lies in the central and northern parts of the county, where also is the Isle of Ely, although it can no longer be called an island.

In Cambridgeshire are to be found various sorts of soils, such as loam, chalk, and clay. Those with a chalk subsoil are called 'Whitelands,' and are very fertile when sown with beans and wheat, the latter being of excellent quality. At one time, indeed, the seed wheat from Burwell was in general demand as some of the finest produced in the whole country. In the valley of the Cam is much grass, and this part of the county has been named 'The Dairies,' after its prevailing industry. In the south of the shire is some rising ground, but none of the hills are high. Cambridge, so far as rainfall is concerned, is one of the driest counties, having an average of only twenty-two inches. The climate on the Uplands is healthy; in the Fens, however, fever and ague exist still, though these complaints are far less common than they used to be.

There are three classes of land in Cambridgeshire—the Uplands, the Skirtlands (which border the Fens), and the Fenlands proper. Of these three the Fenlands have felt the

prevailing depression least, although, at any rate in some instances, during the last five-and-twenty years they have fallen as much as 50 per cent. in selling and letting values. Still, as they are fertile, comparatively easy to work, and not liable to suffer from drought. Even at the present low price of corn, which is still their principal crop, they remain much more valuable than the upland clays and chalks, or indeed the Skirt mixed soils. How heavily these latter classes have been afflicted could easily be proved by figures, but for the purposes of present example a single typical instance may suffice. Here are the particulars of a small-holding at Whittlesford, known as the Hill Farm, in which my friend, Mr. A. Tuck, of Ditchingham Lodge, to whom I am indebted for these figures, was interested as a beneficiary.

In 1872 this farm of 146 acres, bringing in a rent of about £300 a year, was purchased for £8,000. So well in those days were lenders satisfied with the security of the land, that money was advanced upon it by mortgage to the extent of £9,000. In due course the mortgagees foreclosed, and, growing tired of their bargain, sold it in 1901 for £2,000 ! At the date of this sale the farm brought in only £130 per annum in rent, from which must be deducted an allowance of £30 a year to the tenant, plus another £30 a year, expenses of drainage rate and land tax, which left the net rent at £70 a year.

Some of the old Cambridgeshire stocks, such as the families of Allix, Pell, King, Jenyns, Frost, Adeane, Hurrell, Hall, Fordham, and others, still remain upon their ancestral acres, but during the last score of years most of them have melted away. Round about Newmarket, the great home of racing, their place has been filled by an influx of millionaire owners from all parts of the globe, who are interested in this and other forms of sport. That they bring money into the neighbourhood there can be no doubt, but I was told on all hands that the great majority of them take no real interest in the land or its occupants, and in no sense replace the old if more modest class of gentry, whose pride and pleasure it

was to busy themselves in the county and its affairs. This is the more to be regretted since, compared with other counties, Cambridgeshire has but few resident gentlefolk, except, of course, the clergy. In the Fens, indeed, hardly anyone will live save those who are actively concerned in the management of the land, since here are to be found neither sport, scenery, nor society. Nor do the rich folk from London and elsewhere seem to flow in and found new families in other divisions of the county; they confine themselves for the most part to the neighbourhood of Newmarket.

In short, the case of Cambridgeshire seems to me to bear out, as indeed does that of many another county, the remarks which I made in the previous chapter, to the effect that it is foolish to hope that the regeneration of rural England as a whole will be brought about through the purchase of properties by *nouveaux riches*. This class does not, as a rule, buy land for its own sake or from motives of philanthropy. On the contrary, it wants good value for its money, in pleasure or social consideration, and will go only where this is to be had. The old serviceable stock of English country gentlemen who, generally, like poets, are born and not made, was a tree of very slow growth, and one which it will not be easy to replant.

Mr. C. P. Allix, of Swaffham Prior House, with whom we had the good fortune to stay in Cambridgeshire, is the present occupier of an estate which has been held by his family for many generations. Moreover, he takes a leading part in county affairs, has all his life been deeply interested in the land, and is himself a practical farmer of 500 acres of land. Obviously, therefore, there can be few men whose opinion on local matters is of greater value. He said he thought that the amelioration of the present depressed agricultural conditions must be slow, but that the swing of the pendulum would occur. His reasons for this belief were that after prices had been low early in the last century they recovered, and he did not see why this should not happen again.

I suggested that we were now governed by a totally

different set of circumstances. Mr. Allix replied that he put faith in the growth of foreign local demand, due to an increase of population among those peoples who produce the bulk of our imported food. Also he could not understand why shipowners should continue to carry grain at such low rates. Further, in his neighbourhood the agricultural industry had risen above the lowest point that it had touched; there was more confidence and more competition for farms—at a rent. As for our present troubles he had no remedies to propose, nor could he say that he perceived any definite opening in the clouds. Wages, he considered, were as high as the industry could bear, and any further advance would mean the extinction of the owner who depends on agricultural income, since although in the first instance such demands are made upon the tenant, ultimately they fall upon the landlord's back or—pockets.

As it is, the position of that class was very false in Cambridgeshire, a point which Mr. Allix proceeded to prove by various convincing and specific instances which I need not quote. The industry, he said, was doubtless trembling on the verge of ruin, and there were no resources to fall back upon, as there used to be; no margin out of which to meet a further loss. As regarded the future, if things went on as they were doing, those parts of the country that are suitable to the purpose would become a mere playground for rich men. Of the rest that which was originally grass would again go to grass, and that which was originally forest would again become forest—grass to grass, forest to forest—the best lands only, such as the more productive fens, being kept in cultivation. Outside of these, immense properties would be taken up for sporting purposes, on which would live wealthy people, with their gamekeepers, huntsmen, and gardeners; a change that in the aggregate might mean a new England, since it must involve the further depopulation of the rural districts and the weakening of our national manhood. As it was, the young men were without doubt drifting away rapidly. 'They are always on the move.' In the opinion of Mr. Allix,

one of the reasons for this was that 'we dare not raise a man above the rick, however good he may be, for fear of upsetting the rest'

It came to this, that the future prosperity of the land, in which was involved the maintenance of its population, turned on the question of prices; and if these continued to be so bad, whatever his hopes might be, he could not say that we were not in face of agricultural and national disaster. Still, it must be remembered that the panic had passed, and that land was no longer so cheap as it used to be. Now it was selling at from one-third to one-half of the price which it fetched in the old good days. The average rent of the rich Skirtland, by the way, he put at 15s. an acre.

Mr. Allix said, further, that, notwithstanding an abundance of allotments and other favourable circumstances, such as the advent of the railway, between the years 1861 and 1891 the population of Swaffham Prior had shrunk from 1,826 to 1,000. He did not then know the exact results of the last census, but believed that they showed a further decline. He stated that if it could be proved that there was a demand for them, he would be content to split up his property into small-holdings; only then someone must provide houses and buildings to whatever extent might be necessary. In face of the result of the experiment of his neighbour, Mr. Hall, he did not, however, feel any confidence as to the success of such holdings in that locality.

Mr. Allix believed in the desirability of the division of the land among more hands, and thought that properties too large to be personally enjoyed and managed would be a fair subject for legislation. To such properties, in his opinion, a modified form of the French law might possibly be applied—that is, those of them that exceeded a certain acreage might be legally divided on the death of their owners. The rich people who had come into Cambridgeshire in search of sporting estates were, he considered, of little use as county men, their interest in the places they purchased, which were kept up by wealth acquired elsewhere, being merely a pleasure interest.

It was very difficult to persuade these wealthy gentlemen to busy themselves in local public affairs or institutions, nor could their advent compensate for the lost class of small gentry and yeomen. Indirectly they did some good, however, by the amount of money they put in circulation, also they had raised the price of sporting rights and of certain kinds of produce, and thus affected the value of residential lands for the better, low as this still remained.

Mr. W. H. Hall, to whom I have alluded above, whose property we visited at Six Mile Bottom, owns about 5,500 acres of mixed land in Cambridgeshire, 2,000 of which he farmed himself so skilfully that he actually paid into his own account, £ rent of 7s. 6d. an acre and 4 per cent. on capital. Thirty years ago he began his experiments in the establishment of small-holdings. In those days land was valuable in East Anglia, and the farmers at Six Mile Bottom, who paid 30s. an acre more readily than they do 15s. to-day, were very reluctant to give up even a few fields to satisfy the demand of their labourers for allotments, and still more so to submit to small-holdings being clipped off their farms. Indeed, Mr. Hall made himself unpopular by insisting upon this sacrifice. Even in those prosperous times, however, he found that there was practically no demand for small-holdings as distinct from allotments on the part of purely agricultural labourers. Indeed some years later Mr. Hall offered to advance half the needful capital on loan, to any *bona fide* labourer who could prove to him that he had saved the other half necessary to the equipment of a small-holding. He was, however, hardly able to find one who could produce the sum required, although many of them were already in possession of large allotments on which they might have been expected to save money. Yet, to my mind, this fact tends to prove the poverty of the labourer rather than his lack of will or capacity to manage a little farm.

From first to last Mr. Hall had succeeded in establishing about twenty small-holders, drawn from the classes of publicans, millers, shopkeepers, postmasters, masons, game-

keepers, woodmen, gardeners, blacksmiths, and coal-carters. Most of these men did fairly well for about the first half of his thirty years' experience. In 1901, however, only ten held on, viz. four labouring farmers, one gamekeeper, one coal-carter, one postmaster, one woodman, and two publicans.

He informed me that most of the outlay on buildings necessary to the accommodation of the small-holders had from a commercial point of view been money thrown away; but he thought that the social advantages gained by the promotion of a class intermediate between those of the labourer and of the large employer were considerable. He added that he had about 150 holders of allotments on his land, and that these allotments were very rarely given up.

It cannot be pretended that the result of this experiment is altogether satisfactory. It must be remembered, however, in part explanation of Mr. Hall's comparative failure, that the very poor rainfall of this portion of East Anglia makes dairying, market gardening, and fruit-growing—the small-holders' stand-bys—most precarious pursuits. At any rate, he deserves the gratitude of the community for his public-spirited attempt to deal with a very difficult problem.

In July 1902 I again visited Six Mile Bottom. My host, Mr. W. H. Hall, showed me a most interesting map of the parish of Weston Colville, made by some hand unknown in the year 1612, and most fortunately found by himself hidden away, if I remember aright, in a cottage on the property. The parish, which has an area of about 3,200 acres, was at that time cut up, according to this map, into some hundreds of small parcels of land, held, no doubt, by individual owners or tenants. Over the 2,000 acres or so which, according to the map of 1612, had been most divided in this fashion, I drove with Mr. Hall. It used to be in perhaps three hundred hands, now I believe I am right in saying that it is in three only. Such are the changes which have come about in rural England during the last three centuries.

The reader will remember that the old plan of Feckenham in Worcestershire shown to me by Mr. Jagger, which was

made about the same date, reveals a very similar state of affairs, thus suggesting that these conditions were by no means confined to any particular district of England. The holdings, however, seem to have been smaller in the Cambridge instance, inasmuch as the 2,898 acres of Eickenham land which have now passed into the hands of six holders, together with most of the other soil of the parish, were, in 1591, held by sixty-three separate owners.

In the Weston Colville case the small-holders must have been much more numerous. It is a strange circumstance that the lands which these old Colville holders occupied should be very light, almost a blowing sand in places, wherefore it is obvious that to get a return from them they must have manured heavily. Indeed, how they lived upon such small plots is, and probably will remain, something of a mystery. It was curious to look at this ancient map with its numberless divisions, and then to drive over the land and recognise the windmill marked upon it, standing as it did three hundred years ago, and the great wood of 120 acres still frowning on the rise, but to find the tiny lots of land swallowed up in huge, lonely fields, measuring sixty-nine acres, seventy-six acres, and even as much as 119 acres. Truly the Elizabethan small-holders would be (or for aught we know, are) astonished to contemplate the gardens on which they laboured as these appear to-day.

The country about Weston Colville is very wide and open, and, as might be seen from a pit that we passed, the chalk lies quite close to the surface. Here the crops in the wet season of 1902 looked splendid, especially the barley and the oats. In two years out of three such land scarcely pays to cultivate, but in a dripping time, when the heavy soils and the Fens are in despair, its turn comes.

At Weston Colville Mr. Hall had seventy-eight allotment tenants, occupying a total of seventy-five acres, at an average rent of £1 an acre, or 7s. 6d for a quarter of an acre. These allotments lie very conveniently all round the village, in which there are also a reading-room, a cricket

ground, and many new cottages built by Mr. Hall. Some of the old ones, however, struck me as bad, but at that season of the year most of the gardens with their white lilies were singularly pretty. Probably owing to the presence of these allotments and its other advantages, the population of Weston Colville, as I was informed, had only sunk by about fifteen during the past decade. I saw one or two of the small-holders. One of them, Taylor by name, who held three acres, seemed to get along and no more. Mrs. Taylor told me that her sons had all gone, except one who was married. Another, Mr. S. Marsh, had about forty acres. He informed me that his crops were very good that year, and generally, I thought, seemed quite satisfied.

Mr. Hall is a large landowner holding 8,500 acres in three counties and fifteen parishes, on which there are no fewer than two hundred dwellings of various sorts and sizes to be kept in order. He told me that £60,000 had been spent on these during the past thirty years, and that a hundred new cottages had been built. Of course to deal thus with an estate necessitates the command of considerable resources: the land in these days will not provide such sums to be spent in upkeep out of its annual rentals and other profits.

To return. Our first expedition from the house of Mr. Allix was made under the guidance of a large farmer, Mr. Ambrose, of Partridge Hall, to see that and the Gravel Pits farms. Before reaching the village we passed the two Swaffham Prior churches that stand side by side in the same churchyard. Of one of these, St. Mary's, an ancient building at present still more or less in ruins, where the Allix family have been buried for generations, the restoration has been commenced at a cost of several thousand pounds. The Church of St. Cyriac was, I understood, rebuilt about 1814, for which purpose a rate was levied on the parish of £1 2s. in the pound! There followed, said Mr. Ambrose, 'such a royal row as you never heard of in your life,' which lasted indeed from 1814 almost to the present day. To me

it is a mystery how so gigantic a rate could be levied for the purpose of church building or repairs, and by what authority it was decreed or enforced. Doubtless, however, in 1814 things may have happened which we should now think strange. Many of the cottages in this village were, like the walls, built of 'clunch,' a kind of chalk-marl rock much used for this purpose in Cambridgeshire. They were for the most part small, poor, and tile-roofed, and belonged, I think, to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The population of the place had, I was informed, diminished by forty-one since the last census.

Outside the village the fields of the Uplands, which stand above the Skortlands and much higher than the Fen-level, were very large, and the prospect was wide and open, with few trees. One of these that we passed was called the Church Hill Field, and, according to tradition, had once been the site of seven churches. Here we saw many allotments, of which I was told that there were no less than seventy acres in the parish. The rent of these, I understood, was 40s. on the best Highlands, and on the Fen 30s. an acre.

Of labour Mr. Ambrose, who had farmed in the district for thirty years, said there was just enough; but it was a case of the survival of the 'unfittest,' as many of the men were daft, lame, or blind. On one farm—I think he said his own—three of the hands were 'shanny,' two were one-eyed, and two were lame. In this parish—of Reach I suppose—there were, he declared, not half a dozen stalwart, young married men. He thought, however, that the labourer would find out that he was better off in the country than he was in the town. He had four women in his employ, and put the cost of his labour at from 30s. to 35s. the acre. One of the features of this farm was the growing of white and red clover, sainfoin, and trefoil seeds for crop, which, Mr. Ambrose said, if secured clean, paid as well as anything. Clover leys, or their product, are here called 'stover.' The barley was a full, waving crop, but it was

reported of this land that its cast is poor, and that the actual produce often came to much less than the sight of the growing corn suggested. There was a little smut in the barley, but Mr. Ambrose said that he liked to see this, as it was a sign of a good yield.

On one of the farms of 800 acres 120 tons of cake were used annually. Here they ran eighteen score of ewes, and some of the black-faced lambs were very fine indeed. I believe a number of them had already been sold at 38s. 9d. Also there was a field of potatoes, but Mr. Ambrose was of opinion that the clunch subsoil was not suited to this crop. The rent of this land, I gathered, used to be about 35s. the acre, but had sunk to a little over half that sum, and the capital necessary to farm it really well, was about £10 the acre. The buildings were mostly wood-clad, with thatch, slate, or iron roofs. Water did not seem to be over plentiful here; at any rate I noticed that it was being carted.

Our next visit was to Mr. Allix's fen farm. The value of this land seems to have sunk considerably, as he showed us two lots of it which had been purchased not long before for £13 and £10 the acre respectively, and said that its average value, if in good heart, was about £15 the acre. In the old days he had bought similar land for £30 the acre. A good deal of this soil has been dug for coprolites and left when the bed was exhausted. Owing to recent discoveries of phosphatic matter in other countries this coprolite industry, which used to be very profitable, is now practically extinct. The method of their extraction was to turn back the surface soil, dig out the layer of coprolites, and fill in the soil again. Whether they are or are not the refuse deposited by antediluvian animals, I do not know; scientific opinion on the point is, I understand, divided; but the only books of reference I have at hand say that this is the case. At least there they lie, and owing to the phosphoric acid they contain, which varies, I believe, from 10 to 50 per cent., their value when ground up for manure is undoubted. For this and other reasons it seems a pity that, owing to foreign

competition, their recovery should no longer be remunerative.

This fen farm, of flat, dark, peaty land, was pierced by drift-ways, measuring no less than twenty-five yards across, and known locally as 'droves,' each of which has its own name, such as Whiteway Drove or Black Drove. I presume that the reason of this great and apparently wasteful width is to be found in the liability of the spongy land to be cut up by traffic, which makes it necessary that there should be spare ground where carts or cattle can travel clear of the mire and ruts. The same thing may be observed on unmetalled roads or tracks in South Africa, which I have known to stretch to a width of a hundred yards or more.

In addition to these droves the enclosures are divided by ditches to take off the water. These communicate with larger dykes or 'interlines,' that in turn flow to the great main drains, canals, or natural waterways, into which their contents are pumped by steam power—a work that used to be done with windmills, whereof many stand ruined about the Fens. Were this elaborate system of drainage to be neglected, all these lowlands would speedily relapse into primeval swamp. The cost of keeping it sound and open is provided for by special rates levied upon the various districts. Originally much of these swamps was reclaimed by companies of individuals, who called themselves 'Adventurers,' and were rewarded with the rescued land in proportion to the amount they had sunk in the venture. Thus, one of Mr. Allix's farms which we saw was called the Adventure-ground Farm. In dry seasons the water can be artificially held up to a certain level in these dykes, whence it percolates through the subsoil, keeping the crops green and fresh. Thus it comes about that the Fens have little to fear from drought.

In a good season they can grow as much as six-and-a-half quarters of wheat to the acre, but in 1901, on Mr. Allix's farm, the wheat, which stood five feet high and looked fairly thick and level, would, it was estimated, produce under five

quarters. Of barley about the same amount is grown per acre ; but although very good feeding stuff, it will not make a malting sample. The spring oats were as poor as the winter-sown were excellent, while beans on such soil were much infested with fly. Potatoes were grown also and crop heavily, although the quality is not of the best, being liable to turn black and taste when cooked. Those planted here were of the Up-to-Date variety, and had received fourteen loads of farm manure, 2 cwt. of superphosphates, 1 cwt. of kainit, and 1 cwt. of dissolved bones per acre.

On this farm there was a field that had gone down to natural grass about twenty years ago, half of the area of which had been burnt out by a peat fire to a depth of two feet. Some seasons before I saw it, this field was dressed with basic slag at the rate of 10 cwt. to the acre, with the result that whereas before the dressing six head of stock would eat it out, fifteen head of stock can now be run upon it and leave grass to spare. A very curious circumstance about it was that on the burnt portion the grasses were fine, with an abundant mixture of white clover, whereas on the unburnt portion they were coarse and practically without white clover. Now we all know that basic slag has the property of bringing up this clover where little or none was to be found before. This is strange enough, but what seems still stranger is that it could produce it upon land that had been burnt away to the depth of two feet.

Are we to suppose that twenty-four inches below the surface of the soil, the seeds of white clovers lie in thousands ready to be called into life by the magic touch of basic slag, which, by the way, in this instance practically failed to produce them on the original unburnt level? Since nothing can grow without the presence of its germ, I confess that I see no other explanation. Yet, if it be the true one, it would appear that those seeds must have lain dormant for hundreds or thousands of years, perhaps even from a time before the period when this country became fen. The supposition is marvellous yet not impossible, since Mr. Allix told me—and

I have heard of other such instances (thus, my brother has just reminded me of one that happened at Bradenham when we were young)—that he had seen soil brought from the bottom of a well fifty feet deep, produce an abundant crop of charlock, although there was none of that weed in the neighbourhood.

Presumably, therefore, the seeds of charlock, as of white clover, must have lain buried in the earth for unreckoned ages, waiting patiently till some convulsion brought them to the surface and gave them their opportunity of life. The only other possible explanation is that they were suddenly wafted to these particular spots in great numbers, which seems incredible, for if this should be the case, why did not the charlock grow on the land surrounding the well, and the white clover on the unburnt portion of the field? Also, clover seed is heavy and not easily borne by the wind. I have never heard any satisfactory reason for this phenomenon, and do not know if one exists, except that the ways of nature, like those of its Maker, are past finding out.

Near this field I saw men clearing out the dykes by the piece. Here the clearing them of rush and sedge is called 'roding' and the fying of the sludge to a proper level, 'mudding.' On this farm was a house and buildings where the posts of the gateways were made of yew trees dug out of the peat. How many thousands or tens of thousands of years have gone by, I wonder, since those yews grew upon the spot where they were found.

In driving to see Mr. Edward Frost, J.P., of West Wrattling Hall, and Mr. R. William King, J.P., of Brinkley, *via* Six Mile Bottom, we passed through the Skirtlands to the Highlands. These Skirtlands may be called a halfway house between the black Fenlands and the red Highlands, comprising something of the quality of each. They produce barley of a malting sample and some of the best wheat in England. It was at Burwell, a Skirtland village close by, of which I shall write presently, that the wheat I have already mentioned was produced which in the old days set the

Mark Lane standard of price. In this country also there were many sheep. Beyond the Skirtlands lay the red High-lands, light in character and requiring manure and moisture. Here we saw some splendid turnips and a few fine fields of beet. Now we were in the neighbourhood of Newmarket; indeed, the road crossed the famous four-mile course. There were no longer any fences, the country being undulating, open, and immense, with here and there artificial-looking plantations of pine, beech, and Scotch fir. The straight road runs from Newmarket to London, one arm of a sign-post we passed bearing the legend Newmarket, and the other London, as though between these two centres there was nothing but a waste in which no traveller could wish to stay.

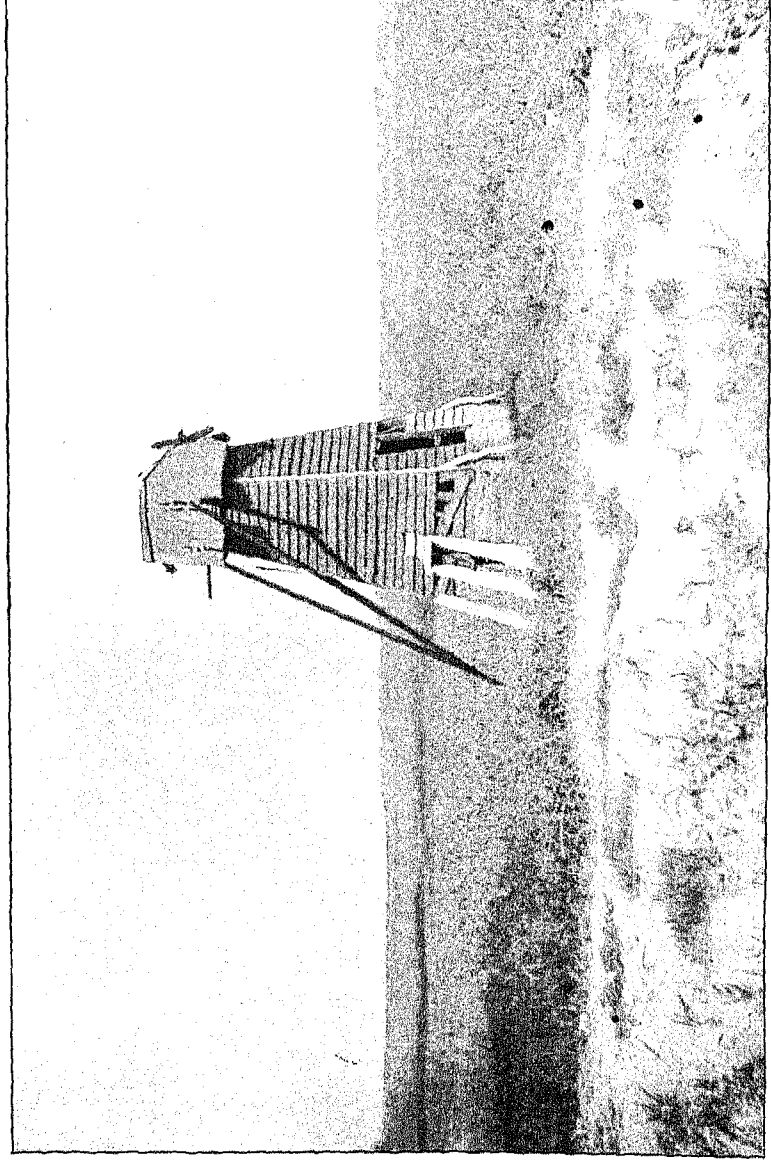
In the neighbourhood of Six Mile Bottom, where the chalk comes almost to the surface, the crops looked well, especially some early-sown oats belonging to Mr. Hall. The fields were wide and hedgeless, varying from 50 to 200 acres in size, the home of thousands of larks, while on the uplands grow belts of Scotch fir. In this district, in the droughty year of 1901, the roots had been saved by an opportune thunderstorm, followed, when they were beginning to fail, by a second similar tempest. The barley, also, had benefited in the same way, with the result that although late, it was of good colour and promise; here, too, a good deal of lucerne was grown. At West Wratting, where Mr. Frost is a large landowner, we reached the height of 370 feet above the sea level, over which the Fens do not rise more than from ten to thirty feet.

The view in this neighbourhood is very fine, including as it does an expanse of five-and-twenty-miles. Thus from Brinkley Hill that evening we saw an enormous stretch of the Cambridge Fens lying between Vandlebury Camp on the Gog-Magog Hills to the south, and Ely to the north. Over these fens hung a thin reek or haze, which as the midsummer sun sank to the horizon, became luminous with a strange, white light that clothed the face of nature in a gleaming and unearthly veil.

Mr. King, whom we called upon at Brinkley, where he owns a considerable estate, told me that his family rose from the land and had been there for a century or more. The value of property, however, had fallen very much; thus when he came into possession, he was bid 60 per cent. more for land than he could value it at in 1901. I think that he farmed all his estate. Mr. King said that old-fashioned people like himself still followed the four-course shift, copying the best Norfolk style of agriculture. Also they kept sheep and did them well. The land in that neighbourhood, he informed me, half from choice, half from necessity, was entirely on the hands of the landlords. It was a playground for rich men, especially in the Newmarket district, where they raced and shot. Those tenant farmers who remained just dragged along and no more. Of the class of Scotchmen who came to Cambridgeshire he spoke without enthusiasm, saying that they often took farms cheap, perhaps at 8s. or 10s. the acre, wrecked the land, and depopulated the district, as they found the Eastern Counties labourer too slow for them.

Mr. King said that although the folk were leaving the countryside generally, this was not the case at Brinkley, whence they went less than they did twenty years before. Probably the presence of one family on the same spot for several consecutive generations has a deterrent effect upon the exodus. He put his labour-bill at 30s. the acre, and the average wage, including all extras, at 16s. 4d., the cottages being let at the low rent of 1s. a week. He was not content with the condition of his crops in that season of 1901, but notwithstanding the drought I thought that those of them which I saw, looked fairly well. He considered that before the state of agriculture could improve better prices must be obtainable, and expressed a pious hope that produce from abroad would not continue to come in so cheap for very long. Of the class of which he is so worthy a representative, those who own moderate-sized estates, and often farm them also, he remarked 'We are being gradually stamped out.'

While driving back over the Highland to Swaffham



DERELICT WINDMILL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENS

Prior, we passed for two miles or more through so vast a swarm of cockchafers, or May-bugs, that the experience is worthy of record. They were present literally in hundreds of thousands, flying into our faces and covering our clothes. As these insects, either as white grubs or in their perfect form of chafers, remain three years in the ground before they appear above it, all the while living on the roots of grass, trees, and crops, it is appalling to think of the mischief that such hosts of them must do. Perhaps some of my readers may know whether it is common to meet them in these countless multitudes. Although the four of us who were driving on that evening had lived our lives in the country, not one could remember ever encountering them in similar numbers.

On another day Mr. Allix took us to see Mr. Robert Stephenson, of Burwell, chairman, I think, of the Cambridge county Council, and a farmer of no less than 1,800 acres, of which a large proportion was rented from the Crown. On our way we crossed the Devil's Dyke, which runs for six miles from what was an arm of the sea, up to Woodlands. It is a vast trench with a rampart on the further side of it, formed from the earth dug out of the trench and doubtless in former days crowned by a wooden palisade. This gigantic fortification, which measures about a hundred feet in breadth, is, I understand, believed to have been dug by the primeval British tribes, as a defence against invaders advancing across the flat lands between the forest and the sea. I was told that the Danes broke through it at a place I saw where the earth has been levelled, called, if I remember right, Burwell Gap, and spread death and desolation in the country beyond.

What colossal labour is represented by this long line of ditch and earthwork, at which thousands of men must have toiled for years, carrying the soil up the steep slope in baskets on their own backs, or, as some think, on those of mules and ponies! And in the end it availed them nothing, since such a rampart must always have been too long to defend successfully against a determined foe. Without doubt, however,

since the dim ages when it was dug, its grassy slopes, now so silent and peaceful, have been the scene of many a desperate war between on-pouring hosts, mad with the lust of loot and blood, and the wretched native population striving to save their lives and those of their women and children from the sword, and their scanty possessions from the hand of the destroyer, as he marched on his bloody road towards the heart of England.

The Romans had a settlement here, for at a spot that was pointed out to me, Mr. Allix unearthed the foundations of some of their villas with the baths, heating arrangements, and floors still *in situ*. At Exning, close by, they are said to have captured that great-hearted British woman, Boadicea, for here, too, the Iceni had their stronghold. Also, besides the Devil's Dyke, there are others; the Fleam Dyke, the Brent Dyke, and one that is mentioned by Tacitus, of which I forget the name. Indeed, history and tradition have written their records upon every acre of this district, few of which, perhaps, are unwatered by the blood of brave, forgotten men.

Mr. Stephenson said that farmers generally were 'beating time, as it were.' In good seasons they kept going; in bad they lost money. During the last score of years or so rents had come down by 50 per cent., and the fee-simple value of most lands, to a third of what it used to be. The poorer Fen now brought in about 15s. the acre, and the Skirt and higher field lands, about 25s. the acre. Of labour there was not quite enough; they were beginning to feel the pinch, and could not get hands when they wanted them, nor was the work done so thoroughly as it used to be. Still, there was a fair number of men of all ages, and some places were worse off in this respect. Speaking approximately, his labour-bill came to the high rate of 45s. the acre. The average wage for ordinary men was 15s. a week, and for milkmen and horsemen 17s., including extras in both cases. There was a certain amount of gardening in the district where small men would take fifteen or twenty

acres, selling their produce at Newmarket. The local manure factory also, to which coprolites were now imported from America and there made up, supported many people. Formerly the coprolites were dug in the neighbourhood down to a depth of twelve feet, and fetched 50s. a ton. Now that the surface supply was exhausted, digging must be carried on at too costly a level; also the price had fallen to 35s. the ton.

The famous Burwell wheat, of which I have spoken, used, Mr. Stephenson said, to be sold for seed fifty years ago. It was the Old Kent long-red wheat which made flour of very good quality. The sort was now lost, although it could be recovered again if necessary; but in fact the new wheats were better, and yielded two sacks more per acre. He had 300 acres of old pasture of a nice quality, although liable to dry up. It was best upon the edge of the Fen. Mr. Stephenson kept 100 cows of the Shorthorn stamp, but, as he stated, not remarkable for their breed or quality, the butter produced going to Newmarket, and the milk, I think, to Cambridge. He said that he was always buying cows, at least a score every autumn, as it was necessary to keep up the standard of the milk, and all the failures were fatted out. He added, 'The more you have, the more they go wrong.' His soil was a deep chalk-marl, which became sticky in winter and was then too wet for sheep. His were Hampshire Downs and Suffolks, but he was giving up the ewe breeding flock. They could grow a second-class sample of malting barley, which would fetch from 28s. to 32s. the quarter, but not the best. For cottages they were pretty well off in that district, although some of them ought to come down. The rich people, he added, who bought sporting estates in Cambridgeshire did not build cottages to any extent, or do anything that was useful to the county and the land.

Mr. Stephenson, whose opinions are certainly worthy of as much weight as those of any man in Cambridgeshire, took a very serious view of the evils incident to the crowd-

ing of the rural population into London and the other great cities, considering them in the light of our national welfare. He said that on the grounds of public health and well-being the State ought to interfere by legislation, and insist upon the factories being moved from the big towns into the country districts. Such legislation would, he thought, be amply justified and help to remedy the evil.

He described to me a process which I was not fortunate enough to witness, as in these days of depression it is, I understand, but seldom practised on account of the initial expense, although it used to be common enough—that of treating fenlands with gault. This gault, a mixture of clay and marl, is dug from the subsoil out of trenches cut ten yards apart, and spread on the surrounding surface to the quantity of about 200 tons to the acre. The land thus treated is said to double its value for the cost of the operation, which may be put at from £3 to £5 the acre. One application will last from ten to twelve years, the full benefit being experienced in the second year after treatment.

As we drove through his farm, which was steam-cultivated, Mr. Stephenson told me that, notwithstanding its sticky nature, this land does not require to be drained. On one of the first fields we came to was, I think, the heaviest-headed crop of wheat I had yet seen: it was estimated to produce forty-four bushels to the acre. Another field had been drilled some years before with lucerne, and in 1899 laid down to grass, the seeds being sown among the lucerne, which, Mr. Stephenson said, in time would die away, leaving a permanent pasture in its place. This system seems to have merits, since while the grasses are establishing themselves, the lucerne still furnishes a useful cut, but I imagine it can only be practised with success where the land has been kept very clean by horse-hoeing between the drills.

* The buildings on this Crown Farm were very extensive and well arranged. They were constructed, I think, of clunch, which is the cheapest material when it can be obtained upon the spot, although Peterborough bricks could be de-

livered at the nearest station for 25s. 6d. a thousand. Thus, one shed was sixty feet long by a breadth of 122 feet, divided into four spans, supported, to the best of my recollection, by lines of posts, and would accommodate fifty head of beasts.

Mr. Stephenson told me he found it best to leave calves afflicted with ringworm undoctored till the disease wore itself out. This I may say is my own experience, as I have found that the various washes which are prescribed by veterinary surgeons, seem to irritate the animals, with the double result that they rub the places into sores and leave infection on every post within their reach. The bulls used by Mr. Stephenson were pedigree Shorthorns, bred whenever possible from cows that were known to be deep milkers. Here I saw reapers and binders, of which Mr. Stephenson has several. They were of American make, costing £30, and called the 'Ideal.' He spoke highly of these machines. He had also an excellent Horsley-Ackroyd engine of eight horse-power, which when at full speed consumed scarcely a gallon of oil per hour, costing in that time three farthings per horse-power.

Near by we visited some capital new cottages, which had cost £200 apiece and contained three bed- and two sitting-rooms. On this part of the farm the seed clovers seemed to have perished owing to the drought, but the sainfoin was doing very well. Winter oats was the worst crop, while the barley was estimated to produce four and a half quarters to the acre, a good return. Here Mr. Stephenson had sown Garton's new six-sided barley on the same field with some of the old six-sided variety, in the hope that the two sorts would intercross and produce seed combining the bulk of the old with the quality of the new. I wonder how the experiment turned out.

Passing on we came to fifty acres of fruit planted, to the best of my recollection, on flat, low-lying land. Mr. Stephenson began this apple-growing venture about the year 1893. He estimated its cost at the rather high figure of £60 the acre. The pears were grafted upon crab stock, the stock

having been bought and worked *in situ*, and the apples on free, crab, and paradise stocks. The results of his experience were that those apples which were worked on crab or free stocks, and especially upon the former, had, at any rate on this soil, done far better than those that were worked on the shallow-rooted paradise, which matures early and, on some lands, goes back as soon. Here I saw numbers of the paradise trees at a standstill, or already dwindling, while the crabs alongside of them were vigorous and thriving well. The man in charge of the orchard told me that they had found Bismarck, Worcester Pearmain, Cox's Orange Pippin, and Pott's Seedling to be the most satisfactory apples. The pyramids were planted eight feet apart and the standards twenty-four feet apart. This fine orchard had not existed long enough to enable its owner to form a positive opinion as to the profits that it will produce. It was clear, however, that so far, the expenses connected with it had been somewhat heavy.

Next we drove to the cement works which Mr. Stephenson was in process of erecting as a private venture, on a scale sufficient to put out 200 tons a week. Here on a farm which he had bought quite cheap—I think at less than £20 the acre—had been discovered magnesian limestone and clay mixed by nature, and admirably adapted to the manufacture of cement without the cost of an artificial mingling of these substances. Analysis showed the presence of from 72 to 76 per cent. of carbonate of lime, the balance being clay. The process of cement-making need not be entered into here, but we saw buildings and machinery in course of construction in which the raw material would be dried, ground, mixed, made into bricks, and finally burnt with coke in the kilns. Notwithstanding the great competition that he will have to face, Mr. Stephenson was convinced that owing to the special advantages under which he worked upon this property, he would be able to carry on the manufacture at a profit. I trust, and indeed believe, that this will prove to be the case, although I heard that some other cement works in the

neighbourhood had not been very successful. Near to this factory a large field was pointed out to me that sixty-two years ago, before the good times began, sold for £50 the acre. When it came into the market recently it only fetched £25 the acre. Here is an eloquent example of the fall in the value of Cambridgeshire land.

At Bottisham I went over the farm of Mr. MacArthur, of the Hall Farm, of 400 acres, which he held under Mr. Roger Jenyns, of Bottisham Hall. Mr. MacArthur had taken over this farm on the sudden death of his father a year or two before, and I was much struck with the grit and ability that had enabled so young a man unexpectedly to assume control of a large business, and work it with energy and success. I suppose that here we have another instance of the self-reliant and determined Scotch character which in every walk of life, rarely allows its owners to let slip the skirts of chance or to turn from the burden of responsibility.

Here in Cambridgeshire Mr. MacArthur followed the farming receipt of his compatriots in Hertfordshire—milk and potatoes. Of cows he kept about fifty of the Ayrshire and Dutch breeds, the former imported from Scotland direct, his average return being a barn gallon per day, per head, I suppose, throughout the year. His milk he sent to London at a contract price of 1s. 2½d. in summer and 1s. 8d. in winter per barn gallon, minus 2d. carriage. These Ayrshires, he said, were rather liable to milk fever, which made it necessary to keep them in low condition before calving. There were ten horses employed upon the farm, and the labour-bill came to £700 a year, 13s. a week being the ordinary wage, without extras. Of potatoes, which had received twenty tons per acre of London peat-moss manure, with 2 cwt. of guano at seeding time and 1 cwt. of nitrate of soda applied by hand up the ridges, he had forty acres; of wheat thirty-five; of clover and grass seventy; of oats ninety; and of barley none.

The soil was a sandy loam, in places very deep; but Mr. MacArthur said that the mangold did best on black or feu-

land, from which the returns were sometimes as high as fifty tons per acre. This root received twenty tons of cow manure, 2 cwt of Peruvian guano, and 1 cwt of nitrate of soda, a like amount of the last stimulant being again applied when they were hoed. The result of this treatment was a really splendid crop. The swedes were the Drummond and Stirling Castle varieties, of which I understood that Mr. MacArthur had the best crop in Cambridgeshire in the season of 1900. Even in the dry year of 1901 his clover and grasses had produced two tons an acre of hay, worth at that time £5 a ton. His potatoes—the Up-to-Date and Triumph sorts—were lifted with a digging machine, which dealt with four acres in a day. The expense of picking, digging, pitting, and opening with his own men, amounted to £1 the acre. The average crop of these tubers, plus the siftings, was six tons to the acre, which realised about £3 per ton, enough being saved for seed. The carriage to London cost 16s.—per ton, I suppose. The seed potatoes were chosen from tubers less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ and more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter, those smaller than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch being sold or used for feeding purposes.

Sainfoin did well upon this ground, as also did lucerne, of which there were three or four acres. The clover leys were left down for one year only and followed by oats, whereof we saw some good crops that had been treated with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of guano and 1 cwt. of nitrate of soda sown broadcast. Spring oats, by the way, were said to do better than the winter-seeded. In three of the fields I noticed some charlock, locally known as ‘carlick.’ Mr. MacArthur was an advocate of spraying to destroy this pest, a process which he had found successful nine times out of ten, at the moderate cost of 2s. 6d. an acre. His usual rotation was (1) potatoes; (2) wheat or oats; (3) seeds; (4) spring or winter oats. On this interesting and well-managed farm the best was made of everything. Thus the tops of the manure heaps were coated with muriate of potash to absorb the volatile elements which evaporate as the muck dries. In short here were

brought to the land what it must so often lack, observation and intelligence

Mr Hancock, whom I saw at Swaffham Bulbeck, farmed 120 acres, eighty of them under Mr. Allix. He said that by working hard every day as he did, farmers might make a living and pay their way, but no more. A man with sons to help him need not be afraid about labour, but he was a bachelor. He and his brother did a great deal of the work themselves, with a few men to assist them, one of whom had been with him thirty years. The best of the people went; they all got that fever more or less one left and then the others left, while those who remained behind were of a different class from what they used to be. He complained that they could not make enough of their wheat, and thought that the Government ought to put a little duty on 'something or other.' Well, since then the Government has put on 'a little duty,' though whether it will be of any great advantage to farmers is another matter—I think not.

Mr. Hancock's crops were looking very well on the whole, although the barley and oats were rather light. Indeed he said that his wheat was the best he had grown for years. 'We must do as well as we can,' he concluded rather sadly, 'but we begin to get older and there is no pension for us!' He was a man who had lived a lifetime in this neighbourhood and seen many things. The tenor of his conversation and stories of the past went to show how general was the submergence of the old-fashioned classes of landlords and tenants. One by one, like the Arabs of the poem, they had folded up their tents and vanished away from the agricultural camp. But others have taken their places, and there is still a camp—of a sort.

Among other gentlemen, whilst staying with Mr. Allix, I had some very interesting conversations with Mr. Roger Jenyns, of Bottisham Hall, whose family has been settled at Bottisham since the time of Charles I. Indeed, his ancestor was one of the thirteen who subscribed the money to drain the fens in those parts, and his great-grandfather became

the chairman of the famous Bedford Level Corporation. In his grandfather's time, some of the land he owned fetched £2 an acre rent, now it was worth only £1, or on an average not more than 15s. He said that owners in those parts had lost from a half to two-thirds of their income owing to the depreciation of property, and that many of them were bankrupt and gone. Thus both Mr. Allix and Mr. Jenyns told me that Stetchworth had been sold twice over within their recollections, and was now a pleasure estate. The owner of another property had died in penury, and a South African gentleman sat in his place.

To continue the list would be too long; ten places were mentioned, one after another, which had gone the same way. They said, in short, that almost all the old Cambridgeshire landed aristocracy had departed, and that their ancestral homes have passed into the hands of rich racing or shooting men, who hold them for amusement, and are not animated by the same objects and ideas as the class which they dispossessed.

They told me also that while a few with exceptional brains, capital, and energy still succeeded, the majority of the tenant farmers were but just keeping their heads above water, while many were losing money. One gentleman—I think it was Mr. Allix—said that he had received two offers for his in-hand farms, but he would not let the land to be worked out a second time, although the rent proposed, if paid, was more than he could make himself. Most of the local owners were farming their own land, as tenants could not be found with sufficient capital to work these big holdings, although 'land-skinners' could be found. The average wage, inclusive of extras, they put at 16s. a week. Of cottages there were about sufficient, although some were bad; but Mr. Jenyns said that in order to keep men on the place he was building two, which I saw afterwards, at a cost of £500 for the pair.

Afterwards he explained to me in an interesting letter that the reason why very many landlords were so hard hit

in Cambridgeshire and East Anglia generally, was because family jointures and mortgages at 4 per cent. interest had been heaped upon the estates in the good times. The result was that when farm rents sank 50 or 60 per cent. there was little or nothing left for the unfortunate succeeding owner on which to live. Personally he had felt the weight of this evil. He was sure that within a few years the labour question would become acute in that district, for then the old, and most of the young men, would have gone. The former could not be recalled, and what would suffice to keep the latter? Higher wages? How could they be paid at the present prices of produce? Better cottages with gardens and convenient allotments? Ownership of the home wherever possible?

Perhaps these might be palliatives. But the wish for independence was growing among the rural population, as seemed but natural in these progressive days. To go away was so easy; it was so fascinating to seek the unknown. Could we expect a man to return from the towns in order to follow the plough for the benefit of others? Still, he might be inclined to do so, or even to remain upon the land, if he could work it for his own benefit.

Mr. Jenyns was unable to see where farmers with sufficient capital to work these large arable districts, were to come from in the future, as that capital did not exist among the class, and there was nothing to tempt new people to put it into the land. The prospect would seem to be, therefore—either it must go out of cultivation, or, if he could afford it, be farmed by the owner himself. He thought that possibly, in days to come, syndicates would arise owning or hiring large tracts of country, and working them by the aid of the most modern labour-saving machinery and of a few highly trained and highly paid men. Also where the land was conveniently situated, and otherwise suitable for the purpose, the number of small-holdings might be increased. But then the question would have to be faced as to how the necessary houses and out-buildings were to be paid for, and by whom.

Kingsley in one of his novels talks of somebody who by the inspiration of God began to drain the fens. The traveller who is nature-minded, if I may use the term, might often wish that the inspiration had not been so thorough-going; in other words, that some of the poorer portions of the Fen had been left undrained to be the home of wild-fowl, beasts, and insects. I have heard it stated by fen owners that, considered only from a pecuniary point of view, there are considerable tracts which would pay better thus than they do under the plough, since then they would escape the heavy drainage rate of 5s. or 8s. an acre, and be very valuable to let for the purposes of sport.

As it is, but one spot remains, a tract of 700 acres, known as Wicken Fen, which we visited under the guidance of Mr. Allix. On a bright summer's day, such as that on which I saw it, it is a lovely place. We were towed to it in a barge drawn by a horse up a canal which passes through an utterly flat country, and is clothed on either bank by an endless line of swaying reeds. Here and there stand the gaunt skeletons of disused mills, solitary and grim-looking, on that vast sunlit expanse that fades by degrees into the hazy distance of the horizon, its dead level, colourless except for the green of the rushes, broken only with the brown stacks of turves for burning and long, thin rows of graceful poplars.

Further on, at the junction of Swaffham Prior, Burwell, Wicken, and Waterbeach parishes, lies the hamlet of Upp Ware, with its two pumping stations and its public-house, advertised as 'Five Miles from Anywhere: Stop and Take a Drink.' Before we reached this, however, having passed a large artificial manure factory and a desolate, deserted house, where a woman had been brutally murdered by her husband, our boat turned up the Wicken Lode. Here we could see the shoals of red-finned, green-scaled roach glide past us in the clear water, and on the banks, the young partridges running among the tall grasses and meadow-sweet. Presently they tried to fly across the lode, or perhaps the barge-rope caught them; at any rate two of them fell in, and had to

be rescued from among the green leaves and the white, gold-hearted cups of the water-lilies, over which hovered dragonflies, red and blue.

Then came two barges laden with towering loads of brown sedge, that makes the best thatching in the world, though now, alas! the plant is growing rare. It takes four years to mature, and then, if good, fetches £1 a load. That species of *Cyperaceæ* which locally is called the mother-sedge, grows up like a round green stick and blooms from joints set at intervals along its stem.

They passed, and presently I saw a sight that is yet rarer—a yellow, black-barred, swallow-tailed butterfly floating towards me with a bold, determined flight, not unlike to that of the common Red Admiral which followed on its path. I confess that I have rarely been more delighted, since these glorious insects are, I believe, only to be found in Great Britain upon this and one or two other patches of fen, whence doubtless they will vanish before many years are passed, as the Great Copper has done already. How can it be otherwise when their habitat is so circumscribed, and, being unprotected by law, every man's hand is against them, even the fenmen collecting the chrysalis for sale?

Indeed, I myself have hastened their extinction, since, after an active search, I found one of the caterpillars, emerald green in colour with purple-black bars, feeding on wild carrot in the heart of the fen, and secured it for the benefit of an entomologist friend, a proceeding for which doubtless I ought to be fined. Its end was unfortunate, for an ichneumon fly, a great enemy of caterpillars, had already laid an egg within its body, which, developing in the chrysalis, soon turned it to an empty shell; so my pains were lost. Yet when I secured it, no caterpillar could have seemed more healthy. I have seen plenty of these butterflies in foreign countries, but the three which I met with that day in Wicken Fen, struck me as larger than those that I have studied in other parts of the world. Also we found nestling amid the dense growth of sedge and rush grasses, a specimen of the Cambridgeshire

Fen fern, which is now so rare, and some fine plants of *Orchis pyramudalis*

I cannot dwell longer on the description of this delightful place. Indeed, I must apologise to the reader for this rare and temporary lapse from the straight path of agricultural duty. Too soon we were obliged to return, gliding homewards between the boundless lands on which still stand clumps of willows, marking the sites of the thatched hovels of the old fen-dwellers, who lived here on little knolls in the midst of a world of water. No wonder that they suffered from ague and ate opium to make them forget its spasms, or perhaps to ward them off. Some of the old people, the boatman told me, take it still, although the poppies are no longer grown in their garden plots, and it can only be bought from the chemist under the synonym of 'six penn'orth of comfort.' There must be something depressing and melancholy about these districts as a dwelling place for men. At any rate I was told that suicide is common among the inhabitants of the Fens, who certainly are remarkable for their silent, solemn air. Strange words still linger in these parts. Thus I heard the fennmen who accompanied us call the ribs of their boat 'futtings' and 'nobblings.'

In the Fens proper, or at Wilburton Manor, on their border, we stayed with Mr. A. J. Pell, one of the few residents in this district, who farms about 1,000 acres of his own land. Of this extent no less than 600 acres are in the Fen, of which, although this is not altogether easy, I will try to describe the appearance. Let the reader imagine a vast stretch of black land, with nothing on it to catch the eye except the poplar trees, the numberless straight ditches full of shimmering water, and on the horizon, beyond the long, sloping bank of Skirtland, the tower and octagon of the glorious fane of Ely. Even in the sunshine, when clothed with the varying green of summer crops, it looks a lonely land; but to understand its desolation it should be seen in its nakedness beneath the pouring rains of winter, or when the gales of February are filling up the dykes with fine-blown, peaty dust.

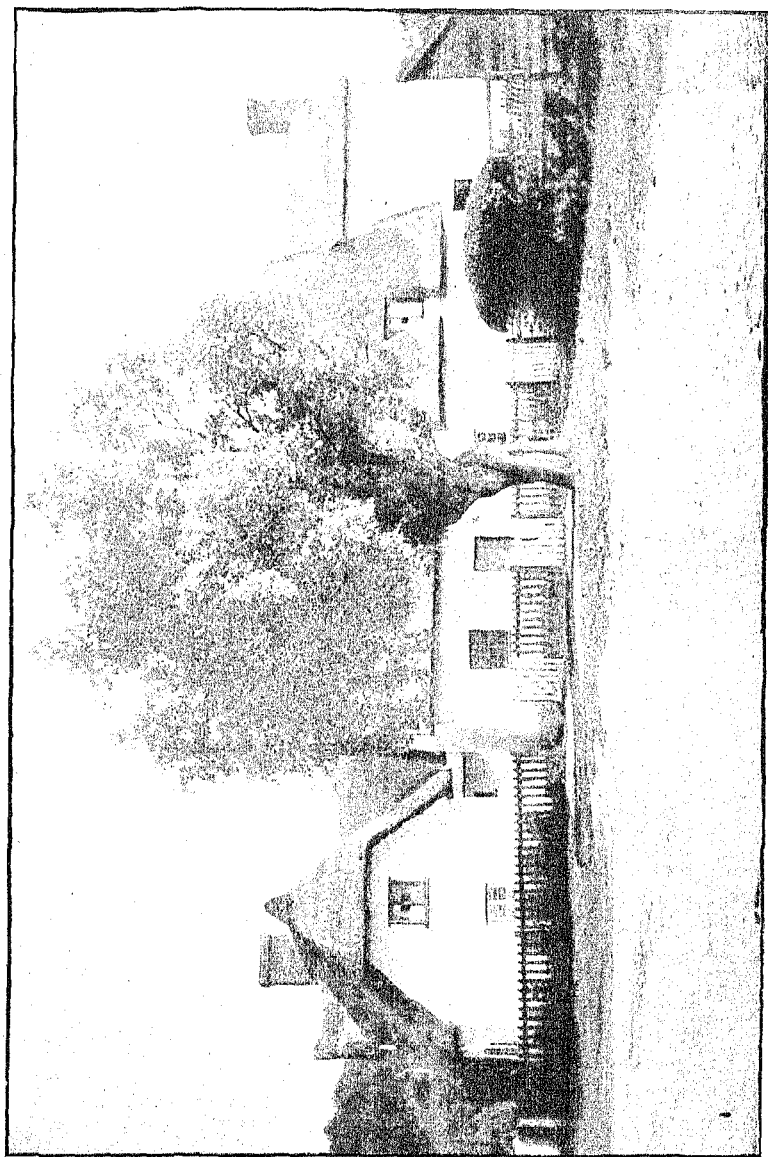
It is very strange to gaze at it and to remember that, as the coprolite beds beneath seem to bear witness, here was once the haunt of countless, gigantic reptiles. Here, too, rolled the sea, and here at different epochs of the immeasurable past, grew and decayed at least three separate forests—a forest of fir, a forest of yew, and a forest of oak. To this day the ploughman or the ditch-drawer finds their trunks beneath the peaty soil, and, as I mentioned on a previous page, I myself have seen yew trees that grew, I suppose, hundreds or thousands of years ago, set up to serve as posts in the farmyard steading. These were so wonderfully preserved by mud and water, that when I cut them with my knife, the rosy colour of the wood was as fresh as on the day that tree was buried. Also, in later ages, here has been the home of fighting-men. In Mr. Pell's house at Wilburton is a case filled with scores of bronze spears and axe-heads, swords, and targes. Some years since a ploughman found them scattered about beneath the surface of a field I saw, on one of our host's fen farms. Probably they were collected from the bodies of the slain in some forgotten war, and then lost there in a shipwreck. I believe that my friend Sir John Evans has written a pamphlet on this find, but unfortunately I have it not at hand.

Considered from a farming point of view, the Fens have great advantages, especially in a dry season like that of 1901, when, by the simple expedient of opening the sluices, the ditches are filled from the canals, and the water in them is allowed to soak to the very heart of the spongy land. Also this soil is easy to work, a fact which makes it so suitable to the purpose of small-holdings. I was told that through this sandy peat two horses can drag a double-furrow plough; moreover the quality of most of it is very fertile, especially where it has been properly dressed with several hundred tons to the acre of gault or marl, which form the subsoil of the best land, and is worked in the fashion I have already described, by means of trenches that afterwards are ploughed in. Drawbacks to the Fen are, however, that in wet seasons

like that of 1902, which I believe has proved disastrous to all this district, crops are apt to go down and mildew, that local weeds, especially the willow weed, are very prevalent and difficult to eradicate, however often the land is hoed; and that the potatoes, which have become such a favourite and paying crop, go black in the centre and acquire a disagreeable taste unless eaten early. Still, they are all sold in London, where—as I have shown in the case of the Jersey Fluke—so long as it is supplied with a tuber that looks well, the public does not in the least care about its quality.

This was the shift in use upon Mr. Pell's Doles, Australia, and Millground Farms, that lie in a part of the Fen which is said to have been reclaimed two centuries ago, and, indeed, throughout the district—1, beans, with or without manure; 2, wheat; 3, oats or barley; 4, green crop, or ley, sown down with No. 3. Sometimes No. 4 is followed by a fallow up to June, when the land is seeded with brank, or buckwheat, a crop that we saw growing, which sells at about 28s. a quarter, to be used as food for game and other birds. Alternately, or in addition to the beans, which in 1901 were for the most part bad, being much afflicted with 'collar' or black fly, are grown mangold, potatoes, and carrots. Also Mr. James Luddington, a large landowner, who farms over 2,000 acres in the neighbourhood of Littleport, is experimenting with the growth of hemp, of which he had planted sixty or seventy acres in 1901. He told me that in spite of the general opinion to the contrary, he does not consider hemp an exhausting crop, as he has grown wheat after it with an ordinary dressing of manure, and obtained splendid results. Mr. Luddington, who has the reputation of being a very successful agriculturist, said that he took a cheerful view of things, and that it was his opinion farmers were doing well in the Fens. He added that potato growing had helped a great deal in his district, and that the labour question was not acute.

Mr. Pell kept a large flock of sheep, Blackface crossed with Hampshire Down; but complaints as to the price of



wool were general, owners being obliged to accept the miserable figure of 13s. 3d. a tod of 28 lb. for washed fleeces. Also he raised a considerable number of Shorthorn store stock, which were dishorned with caustic potash and sold for fattening purposes at about two years old, the heifers going out as down-calvers. The mares of the Shire stamp were bred from; indeed the breeding of Shire horses is one of the mainstays of the local farming. I should add that the pasture in the Fens is not good, as the land, or most of it, refuses to lay down well. I saw upon Mr. Pell's farm four meadows which were laid about twenty years ago. The grass on these was coarse and innutritious, whereas that which grows upon the artificial banks of the Ouse is, oddly enough, very strong, and will almost fat a beast.

The wheat on these farms looked very good, and the barley, grown after wheat, was also good in this dry year. As a rule, however, barley goes down on these lands and is a bad sample. A field of spring oats was really beautiful: their heavy heads hung down like thousands of green tassels. The mangold did not look quite so well, being neither forward nor too thick. Although it had been horse-hoed, twice hand-hoed and chopped out, still the willow weed was showing between the ridges.

Mr. Pell said that of labour they had sufficient, but I noticed at the homestead of one of the fen farmers that the thatching was being done by old men only. We went down to the Ouse, which here runs through an artificial cut, twenty miles long, made from Earith in Huntingdonshire across Cambridgeshire to Denver Sluice in Norfolk, I think, by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden in the time of Charles I. The space between the banks is very wide, and those parts of it which are not actually covered by the stream, are known as 'wash-lands,' which in times of flood can be overflowed by the excess water without harming the surrounding country. These wash-lands belong to the owners of the properties adjacent to them, and, as I have said, furnish very good feed. The retaining banks of the cutting are formed of gault. In

this district there exists a custom of taking in cattle to feed at a fixed charge upon spare grass. Such cattle are said to be 'joisted.'

In the afternoon, in the company of Mr. King, Mr. Pell's bailiff, I visited some of his higher lands. On one field he had a very good crop of maize, and the beet also were excellent. In these four men were hoeing, not one of whom, I observed, was under sixty years of age.^a The young stock on this farm were kept in the byre during the day in order to protect them from the flies, and supplied with tares, but at nightfall they were turned out to feed until the following morning. Here I saw thirty-four acres of fine pasture which had been purchased in 1900 for £860, twenty years before this same land sold for well over £2,000. Speaking generally, the pastures between Wilburton and Ely struck me as poor, foul, and coarse.

I visited also a fruit farm of five acres, owned, I believe, by Mr. Pell, and in the occupation of Mr. Hazell at a rent, I understand, of £10 an acre. This garden of standard apples and plums, with gooseberries and currants between, cost from £20 to £24 per acre to prepare and plant. The trees were set twenty feet apart, with three lines of gooseberries and currants between them, and seemed to be doing well, being on good and suitable soil—old pasture broken up, if I remember right. The black currants, however, which sold for £25 the ton, mostly for dye-making purposes, suffered here as elsewhere from big-bud, or currant-gall-mite, which it seems to me threatens to exterminate that fruit in England. On this point the late Miss Ormerod, that remarkable and patient investigator of insect scourges, says: 'When once established, it is found to be most difficult, if not impossible, to be got rid of by any measures except thorough eradication of the infested plants.'

- In the season of 1901 Mr. Hazell's gooseberries fetched 50s the ton, and his plums, of which he had a good crop of Victorias, had been bought upon the trees at £4 10s. the ton. In order to pay well, they ought, he declared, to bring in £7

the ton. Among the apples Eclingville Seedling, which is shy in some soils, but prolific on kind, good land that is not too heavy, looked very well. In some years of plenty plums are very unremunerative, thus in 1900 I was told Mr. Hazell, after payment of carriage, was actually 2s. 6d. out of pocket on a parcel of thirty-six stone of this fruit and three and a half stone of apples. He hired his pickers by day, currants being paid for per stone weight. Mr. Pell said that he would always be glad to plant an orchard if a suitable intending tenant would take it upon lease.

Mr. William Everitt, chairman of the Wilburton Parish Council, was a small-holder who farmed six acres of fruit, nine of arable, and six of pasture. He kept two cows and always reared two heifers, one of which he sold out every year. He said that pigs were his stand-by, which he fed with maize and the skim-milk. His raspberries and currants he sold at 3d. a pound and his plums and gooseberries at £3 10s. a ton, the latter costing him 30s. a ton to pluck. The labour he said 'lets it all out,' that is, the profit. Digging cost him £1 an acre, and the picking was done by piecework; otherwise, he remarked, he would have 'to hunt the women as a terrier hunts rats,' of course to see that they did their tasks. Mr. Everitt worked so hard himself that he may perhaps have expected too much from the female sex. At any rate in the busy time of the year he was up at 3.45 A.M., and did not cease from his labours till 8.30 P.M. Still, like most small-holders, he seemed fairly cheerful, as he informed me that he made a living, and if he kept his health had no doubt but that he 'would pull along.'

It has been my duty to report so many sombre views of the future of agriculture from the lips of land agents and auctioneers, that it is pleasant to be able to record that Mr. Bidwell, the well-known member of that profession at Ely, took a much more cheerful view of matters. He asserted that here—that is, in the Fens—agriculture was prosperous in 1901, and that although the farmers grumbled so much they were all doing well. He thought that the labour which had gone

away would come back, and that although in this respect the effects of the Education Act were being felt, things had much improved during the past five or six years. He said, however, that on the uplands in many cases there was nothing left for the landlord, and that on poor and heavy properties the game rent was the best rent. In short, it was of the fat Fen lands and their prospects that Mr. Bidwell thought so well.

The fall in rents since 1875 he put at 30 to 40 per cent., and more on cold, heavy lands, while in fee-simple value there was a drop of about 35 per cent. He himself within three weeks had sold £30,000 or £40,000 worth of agricultural land at prices which would return the purchaser 4 per cent. on the rental values; also in Huntingdonshire he had sold an estate by private contract to the sitting tenant at a figure which would return him 4 per cent. for his money. These, however, were good lands, for the poorest soil there was not much market.

The labour question was a difficulty, but Mr. Bidwell thought that in this respect things would work round again. The labourer had 'eaten of the tree of good and evil, and would learn where his true advantage lay.' It was necessary to give him a good home with some land and rights of ownership, to let him plant trees, keep bees, &c. He must have an interest in the land. He could quote many instances of labourers who had worked their way up to be bailiffs or owners. Thus one man whom he knew of this class, at the age of forty-eight had just bought a farm for £8,000. He had dealt in cattle, and done well, growing hemp on the Fen lands. The old-fashioned policy of stamping out smallholders was wrong where the land conditions were suitable to their existence. The men who did best with little farms were the men who had sons. Thus one with whom he was acquainted held five cottages among himself, three sons, and connections. They entered into mutual co-operative arrangements and were flourishing. Those were the people who should be encouraged, not the man 'riding about upon

a hack in kid gloves.' Protection as a remedy was, he thought, out of the question and impossible, but landowners should be able to borrow money through the Government at a low rate of interest to enable them to build cottages and to make improvements. Of the general prosperity of the Fen districts he had no doubt.

I must add, however, that these cheerful opinions were not shared by everybody in the neighbourhood. Thus a large, local landowner whom I had the pleasure of meeting, who had about 1,000 acres in hand, said that the labour question was getting worse and worse. He had a lot of old men, and when they went he supposed that he would have to give up farming, for then the crisis must come. The country districts were rearing men for the towns, and even if there were a slump there, and some came back, they would not be much use upon the land. The great cause of the migration was the keeping of the boys too long away from fields. The more stupid a lad was the longer he must stay at school, and the less able he became to learn useful work. He called this misdirected education.

The farmers were not prosperous; indeed, he did not know how they kept their heads above water. Still, when there was any land to let there were people to take it at the prevailing rents of from 15s. to £1 the acre. Most of the tenants, however, were without much capital, and of a very different class from what they used to be. They took the farms in the hope of doing well, knowing that if they failed most of the loss would fall upon the landlords. He himself was afraid to let his land, as it was in high condition, and if he did so probably in a few years' time he would have it back upon his hands dirty and impoverished. The man who succeeded best was a man with a family on from twenty to sixty acres of land: such people did all the work themselves, labouring from daylight to dark; and he thought that the best and most easily tilled land would fall into their hands, while much of the bad and heavy soil would tumble down to grass and be turned to sporting purposes. For the

future of the useful and productive Fen lands he had, however, no fear

This gentleman, who was an authority upon Shire horses, said that their breeding was a great help, and that a good gelding would fetch from £70 to £80. He told me, however, that nature rebelled at the abnormal size which was now thought desirable by purchasers, and therefore striven after by stud-owners. Even the foals of these very large animals would sometimes refuse to suck; indeed, the bigger they were the more frequently did they decline to feed. The mares also had become very shy foalers. He told me that Mr. Crisp, of Girtton, was the greatest breeder of Shires in Cambridgeshire. It was either this informant or Mr. Bidwell who, *à propos* of the scarcity of boys and of their neglect of work which they were set to do in company, repeated to me this summary of the question given to him by an old farmer. 'One bōr [*i.e.* boy] is a bor, two bōrs ban't but half a bor, and three bōrs an't no bōr at all'

My own view on the labour question, I may state here, after making a great many inquiries on the point in different parts of the county, is that the position was not acute in Cambridgeshire; it was only becoming acute. Some young men were still staying on the land, though that they should do so was sufficiently remarkable. On one farm that I visited the labourers were receiving 12s. or 13s. a week. A building was in course of erection on this place, and I asked the foreman what might be the wage of the ordinary bricklayer. He replied, £1. 18s. for six days' labour of ten hours, minus time for dinner and half an hour's allowance to reach the work. Now, there is no great mystery in the laying of headers and stretchers; indeed, I should consider the agricultural labourer who knows his work the better man. Yet look at the difference between the earnings of the two men.

As I proceeded upon my way I found that of all the knotty points connected with agriculture, the future of the land and its interests, none perhaps excites so much controversy as the question of small-holdings. They have their

eager advocates and their bitter opponents. Some look to them as the light that may lead us to national regeneration, the dawn of a new and brighter agricultural day; while others declare that their increase would signify the ruin of the land and all connected therewith. These are, of course, the extremes; but between their optimist and pessimist poles many milder critics can be found. Time alone will determine which of them may be right; but my own opinion, after hearing all sides of the question and visiting a great number of such holdings, is that they are more likely to be successful where the demand for them is ancient, and they have, to a greater or less degree, already been in existence for a number of generations.

To take some examples. The Bewdley and Evesham districts of Worcestershire, and even Winterslow in Wiltshire, of all of which I have written, have always been remarkable for the prevalence of this class of occupier or owner, while the same may be said of the Dauntsey and Blackmore Vales. The Catshill experiment, inaugurated by the Worcestershire County Council, is, of course, an exception, but it will be remembered that here there lived a body of men who, having lost their occupation, were only too thankful to turn to another which gave them prospects of earning an honourable and independent livelihood. I do not mean to imply that small-holdings will not succeed unless under such conditions, since my own view, to which the example, amongst others, of the Rew Farm in Dorsetshire, gives support, tends the other way; only that success is far more probable where they prevail. It will have been observed by all students of such matters, that England is a country in which it is very difficult to stimulate by artificial means a *bona fide* demand for any change, however desirable this may seem to be. It is not enough to point out to those concerned that such and such an innovation will prove to their advantage; that fact is one which it seems best that they should discover for themselves. Thus, where there is no demand for small-holdings, although I do not say it cannot be created, the

task is difficult, and its attempt not unfrequently ends in failure, whereas if such a demand already exists it can easily be fostered and successfully enlarged.

These are general principles, which would of course be considerably modified if the Government were, as I suggest, to inaugurate an Agricultural Post which would greatly encourage small-holdings and bring many more of them into existence. I think, however, that those principles are to some extent supported by what is to be seen in the parish of Downham, near Ely. This parish, which covers 10,000 acres, most of it fen land, has a population of 1,800, the shrinkage since the census of 1891 amounting only to sixty or seventy souls. It is divided into thirty farms of over 100 acres, forty-five farms of between fifty and 100 acres, and a hundred or more holdings of less than fifty acres, about one-eighth of the land being freehold and seven-eighths copyhold. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners are lords of the manor, in succession to the Prince-Bishop of Ely, and, subject to copyhold fines, which amount generally to no less than two years' rent at death and one and a half year's estimated rent on purchase, about 60 per cent. of the soil is the property of those by whom it is farmed. It will be seen, therefore, that the great majority of these people are small proprietors who work their own estates; indeed, throughout Cambridgeshire it is very common to find that the landlord, great or small, is his own tenant. The origin of these small-holders at Downham and elsewhere seems to have been that before the drainage of the Fens was taken in hand on any large and settled plan, individuals of exceptional intelligence and powers of work contrived to reclaim and cultivate portions of the waste.

Then stepped in the Bishop as lord of the manor, and by virtue of the system of copyhold—that evil burden under which so much English land still labours—imposed a heavy tax upon the raw material of their industry, the soil that they had won from marsh and water. Indeed, were it not for those copyhold fines the small-holders of Downham

would be in far better case than they are to-day Whenever one of them dies, appears the lord of the manor with his demand for two years' rent, or in the case of a sale, for one and a half year's estimated rent. Of course that sum is seldom or never forthcoming, since the profits of the industry do not admit of the laying by of capital Therefore the new owner must borrow, which he does at 5 per cent. from any moneylender who will advance the amount on the security that he has to offer. I am told—and I believe the statement to be correct—that over £20,000 has been lent in this way upon mortgage in Downham, nearly all of it to the small-holders, who must work day and night to live and pay the interest.

On this matter Canon Thornton, the Rector of Downham, under whose guidance we inspected the small-holdings, had a great deal to say. He declared that the general indebtedness was, in his opinion, increasing to a point when it would become unbearable, unless, indeed, some means could be devised whereby it can be put a stop to, or liquidated upon equitable terms; a solution of which at present there is no prospect.

Canon Thornton is a clergyman whose views certainly demand attention, if only on account of what he has done and is doing in his district. The income of the living still amounts, I believe, to £1,000 a year, every halfpenny of which is spent in the parish, where he employs no fewer than four curates to attend to the three churches, one of which—an iron building that is also used as a school—he erected himself in the fen land. Put briefly those views were that the conditions of life among many of his parishioners are brutalising in their hardness. So incessantly, he said, do both men and women labour to earn their living and meet the constant calls for interest on borrowed money, that the result upon their characters is similar to that produced among the peasants of Russia and India, who struggle on from year to year in the net of the usurer. They grow stolid, hard, and capricious. In their toil-deadened life no time is left to them for thought upon any higher thing than

the product of that toil. Thus to religion they are apt to be indifferent, and even, he declared, to lapse into complete infidelity upon a matter which they have no time to weigh. Many of them had become 'materialised', they no longer put their trust in a Supreme Power. Also the women must work harder than it is right for them to do. On the other hand, although they live so sparsely they are, he said, a very fine and healthy race. Further—and this is a curious commentary upon the argument, so generally advanced, that subdivision of the land invariably means a curtailment in the number of offspring—their families are large, averaging no fewer than eight children. Moreover, with rare exceptions, these children 'never go; the sons all remain on the land.'

Finally, Canon Thornton was careful to explain that it is not the system of small-holdings to which he objected, but the conditions under which they are carried on in Downham. He said that the cottages in the neighbourhood were distinctly bad, as many of them were owned by small people who could not afford to keep them up. Often they contained two rooms and no more, in consequence of which overcrowding there was much immorality. He thought that this lack of privacy and of garden ground had something to do with the prevailing discontent among labourers. The reason that the population remained stationary there was that no new cottages were built in place of those which decayed. He was of opinion that the two great remedies needed in Downham were alteration of the crushing system of copyhold and better homes for the people.

Driving down a 75-foot wide 'drove' of black peat, which in winter must be difficult to travel, we came to the dwellings of some of the Downham small-holders. In appearance they varied very much, certain of the houses being smart and new, with tidy gardens, wherein I noticed lilies and other flowers, while some were tumbledown-looking shanties, sunk at one end or the other owing to the shrinkage of the peat foundation, with out-buildings of rough board or tin. The first home we visited was that of a man whose family were

gathered in the lean-to of the house making an afternoon meal of bread, jam, and tea without milk. As a class, by the way, these people live frugally, worse, indeed, than do the labourers. They rarely have any other meat than pork, their dinner consisting of suet pudding and bread. The master of the house, an old man, we found hoeing his patch of mangolds. He spoke freely of his position, saying that he owned about thirty acres. He began thirty-one years before by buying four and a half acres and a house for £250, of which he left £200 upon mortgage. Since then he had acquired the rest as opportunity offered, farming some of it and letting off the remainder at a rent of about £2 the acre.

A remarkable circumstance seemed to be—indicating as it does a land hunger very unusual among English peasants—that although this man went on buying, so far as I could ascertain, he also went on mortgaging. Indeed, it appeared that, after all these years, he was still paying 5 per cent. interest on the debt of £200 secured upon his first purchase. This state of affairs he declared to be common, for he said. ‘All these little farmers have a place they call their own, but it is tied so fast (*i.e.* mortgaged) that it won’t blow away.’ He added that not one out of twenty had paid off the charges on his land. This cottager’s principal crops were wheat, carrots, potatoes, and mangolds.

Another man whom we visited—the son of No. 1—owned no land, but farmed twenty-two acres at 50s. the acre; here, as elsewhere, a much higher rent being demanded from the small-holder than is paid by the larger farmer. About his homestead and in the little meadow we saw cows, pigs, horses, foals, turkeys, ducks, fowls, and two excellent carts. The tenant himself we found threshing rye grass with the help of two sons, the seed being separated from the straw by shaking with a fork upon an outspread rick-cloth. When asked if he considered his position better than that of a hired labourer, he replied: ‘I would sooner be on my own head than on a farmer’s,’ by which he meant that he preferred his independence.

Next we called upon his wife in her six-roomed cottage. She had seven children, the eldest a pretty and tidy-looking girl. She said that they bought meat sometimes, but, as it was only procurable occasionally, salted it down; also that 'when cheap we eat the eggs, but we sit on most,' meaning, of course, that her hens sat on them. She added that only a few of the Fen lads went away.

I omit other instances and come to Mr. Waddelow, whom we saw in the village of Downham. He used to hire twelve acres, but then held only seven, which, with his house, cost him £18 a year. He left school at eight years of age, and never had anything to depend on except his land, out of the produce of which he had brought up a family of eleven children, seven of whom were then in London and doing well. He said he had always had as much as he wanted to eat and drink, and at the moment was clear of debt, but that he had saved nothing. Canon Thornton remarked that he ought to have an old-age pension, at which the old man laughed and said that another ten years would see him out, and that he could work until then—or so I understood him.

My conclusion on the small-holders of Downham is that were it not for the heavy rents of those who hire, and the mortgages which are heaped upon the copyholds of those who own, they would do very well. As it is, they manage to live, but I agree with Canon Thornton that they do so only under conditions which in some cases are almost degrading in their severity. Moreover, although each of them worked as hard as two farm servants, not one of those whom I saw seemed to be inclined to bewail his fate, or to wish to exchange his lot for that of a hired labourer.

Canon Thornton gave me a bill which he had taken from the ledger-book of a local grocer who flourished in the year 1809, together with a statement of the prices charged for equal weights of the same articles in 1901. In commenting on this curious record, he pointed out that, whereas all wages had increased very much during the past fifty years, the cost of

the necessities of life showed a more than corresponding decrease, adding that surely the time had come when something ought to be done for the encouragement of British agriculture, and to make the cultivation of home products a little more remunerative than it is at present. Here is the comparative account:—

Prices 1809.				Prices 1901.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
1 lb Tea . . .	0	10	6	1 lb. Tea . . .	0	1	6
6 lb Lump Sugar	0	6	6	6 lb. Lump Sugar	0	1	3
1½ lb. Yellow Soap	0	1	4½	1½ lb. Yellow Soap	0	0	4½
2 lb. Coffee . . .	0	11	2	2 lb. Coffee . . .	0	3	0
4 oz Pepper . . .	0	0	7	4 oz. Pepper . . .	0	0	4
12 lb. Moist Sugar	0	9	6	12 lb. Moist Sugar	0	2	0
1 lb. Starch . . .	0	1	5	1 lb Starch . . .	0	0	4
2 lb. Rice . . .	0	1	2	2 lb. Rice . . .	0	0	4
<hr/>				<hr/>			
	£2	2	2½		£0	9	1½
<hr/>				<hr/>			

Can anything be more suggestive of the remarkable advance of general prosperity and well-being of the labouring classes, than the figures quoted above, bearing in mind the extraordinary increase in their average earnings since the year 1809? All of us must rejoice that this is so, although with Canon Thornton we may regret that it should have been accompanied by almost as great a fall in the fortunes of those classes who own and till the soil, whose impoverishment is, in fact, a matter of some national concern. It must be remembered that the cost of grain, flour, milk, clothing, and other home-produced necessities that do not appear in this bill have fallen to an almost equal extent.

Driving from Royston to Odsey to visit Mr. Herbert Fordham the Down-land of Hertfordshire lay on our left, and on our right the valley of the Rhee in Cambridgeshire. Here the land was chalky, as was proved by the white streaks in the fallows, and the pastures were bare, whilst among the corn crops glowed the picturesque but unremunerative poppy. Lying below the woods, cresting the Down-lands on

the Hertfordshire side, was a training ground for racehorses, marked with the brown line of a tan track, while from Royston Heath the land sloped gently to the Vale and thence rose to distant wooded ridges. On our way we passed a farm of 1,100 acres which nine years before had sold for £10,000, or about £9 the acre. In 1901 we were informed that it was not worth so much. Mr. Fordham, J.P. and county Councillor for Cambridgeshire, whose family have lived in the shire for generations, told me that his impression was that the farmers were just living. On the light land they paid very little rent, from 7s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. the acre. Indeed, some of it commanded not more than 5s., and some nothing at all. The Wimpole estate of 9,000 acres excepted, there were, he said, few large properties in his neighbourhood, with the result that the land was in many hands, and that the parishes were not under the control of a single man. They had plenty of ordinary agricultural labour, but there was a dearth of horsemen, shepherds, and men who would work on Sunday. Boys also were very short, as they went to London, and a good many of their hands were old. He thought that in the future it would be difficult to properly hand-hoe the land. To meet this trouble he was horse-hoeing his corn with an instrument of which the knives were set to the spaces between the drills.

The wages were 13s. for ordinary men, or 17s. inclusive of extra moneys. Horsemen received 14s. and a house, but Mr. Fordham expected that they would have to be paid more, as they were so hard to find. Of cottages he had built all he wanted, and owing to the dwindling of the population there were plenty in the villages. He seemed to think that the cottagers ought to have fixity of tenure, notwithstanding the fact that in this case it might be impossible to house an incoming labourer. As I have already treated of this question at length I say no more about it here.

Mr. Fordham farmed about 700 acres of light land, of which amount he had recently acquired 380 acres. I under-

stood that his father about the year 1875 offered £16,000 for this same 380-acre farm. It was bought for a higher figure by somebody else who in the erection of a splendid set of buildings &c, spent money upon it which brought up the total cost to £25,000. Mr. Fordham, I believe, purchased it for £6,000 however, at which price he hoped that it would pay him 3 per cent. It would be difficult to find a more striking instance of the fall in the value of land in certain parts of Cambridgeshire. This farm had been in hand too short a while to enable him to say anything definite as to profit or loss, but the old holding of 310 acres he had worked with very considerable success, as the accounts showed that he had paid himself a rent and 8 per cent interest on a capital of £2,500. The year 1900, however, had been one of his worst.

In considering these good results it must be remembered that the place had some advantages, such as being encircled by a high road and having a station on it, from which the surplus hay and straw &c. were despatched to London.

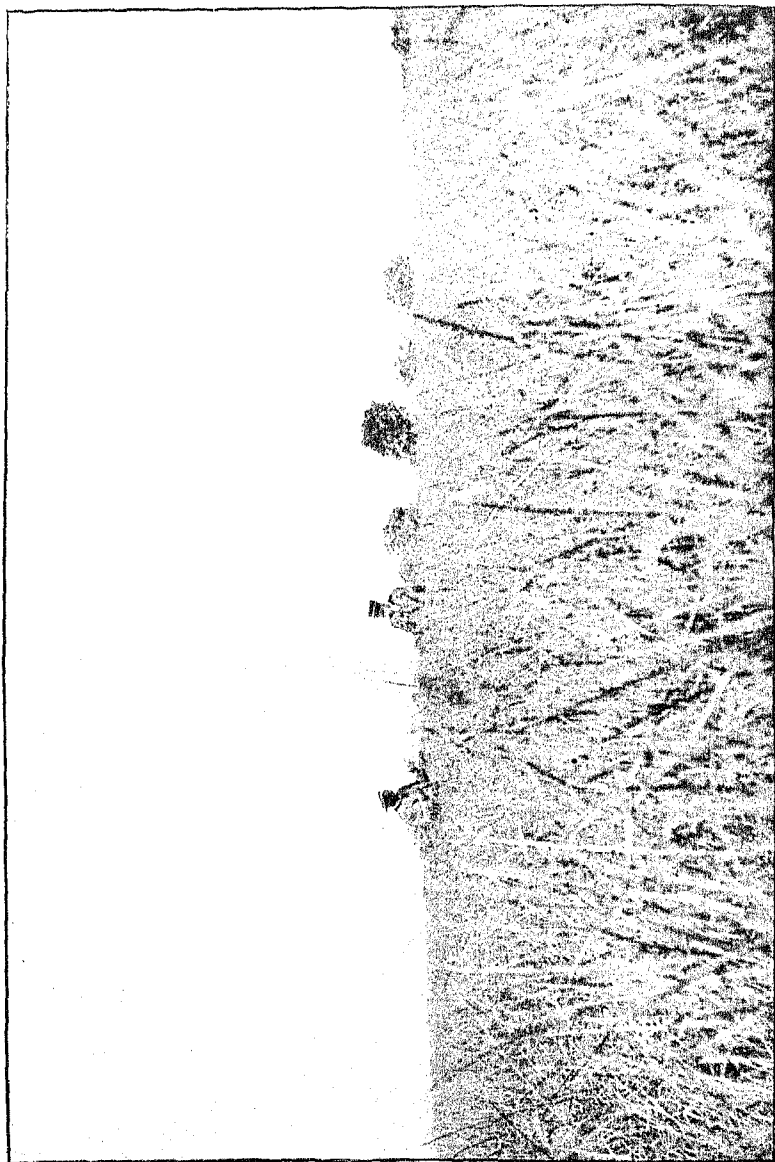
On this farm Mr. Fordham kept 180 Hampshire Down sheep of which ninety were ewes, two-thirds of the lambs being sold and the rest fatted. Here I saw thirty-six acres of grass that had been laid down twenty years before, with results that were not very satisfactory. Another field on the new farm was laid down in 1873, but could not yet be called a meadow. All over this holding were patches of boulder clay and gravel, relics, I suppose, of the ice age. Drought had played havoc with the seeds and kohlrabi, but the wheat on clunch land after sainfoin was good. The soil of the new farm, where Mr. Fordham purposed eventually to plant a considerable area with larch, was for the most part gravel and clay, and sown with wheat and lucerne, of which latter crop Mr. Fordham said that if these droughts were to continue they must grow more. A curious feature of the place was that the whole 380 acres of it lay in one enormous field. Here the sheep were feeding on spring vetches, and kail was grown as a catch crop after vetches. The

winter oats were very forward, but looked as though they were ripening prematurely through drought. The buildings on this farm were truly splendid, and must have cost not very much less than its present fee-simple value. It was, however, sad to look at them and think of the unfortunate owner who invested great sums thus unprofitably.

We also visited a pair of our host's new cottages, which were in every way excellent, and considering the accommodation, I think, cheap at their cost of £400. He showed us a silver cup won by his grandfather in 1816 for cross-bred merino sheep, which at that time it was thought could be established in England. The attempt, nevertheless, proved a failure, though whether this was owing to the breed being too delicate for our climate or because of the inferior quality of merino mutton, I am not sure.

Mr. Fordham thought that so long as the land was worth cultivating it would be possible to keep a certain number of people on it, but man was gregarious and probably would become more so. There might, however, be a revulsion, with the result that the towns would be spread out further into the country. By this I think he meant that there would be more and smaller towns, with stretches of agricultural land around them, which, as I understand it, is the fundamental idea of the Garden Cities Association. Machinery, he added, tended to displace man, who was now becoming more of a directing influence than an actual labourer, with the result that there were not so many inhabitants in the country as there used to be. Doubtless there is some truth in this argument, but my experience is that many rural-bred folk do not wait to be displaced by machinery. On the whole Mr. Fordham thought that the labour question was not acute in that part of Cambridge.

Until I came to Cambridgeshire I believed that Worcester and, I think, Lincoln, were the only counties which had taken advantage of the Small-Holdings Acts. It appears, however, that the county Council in Cambridge in or about the year 1894 purchased thirty-one acres of land to be



disposed of in accordance with the provisions of these Acts. Mr. Arthur Wright, the deputy Clerk to the Council, was so good as to furnish me with the details of the experiment.

The land cost £876, including a fee of £7 7s. to counsel for certifying a perfectly simple title. Up to 1901, twelve acres had been sold and the rest, I think, let to tenants. Two purchasers had defaulted and one lot was sold three times over, but without money loss to the Council. With the exception of two men who had proved unsteady, the present holders seemed to be doing well. Thus an engine driver who began by buying one acre had bought another, and a baker who bought two acres, prospered with them out of market produce. Mr. Wright pointed out how much more advantageous it was to holders to buy than to hire. For instance, a man who had purchased two acres, including interest and tithe paid every year £3 12s. 5d., and thereby was acquiring a freehold, while a man who hired one acre paid an annual rent of £2 and remained nothing but a tenant. He added that he thought the county Council was inclined to increase these small-holdings. I trust sincerely that it may see fit to do so.

While in Cambridge I collected some information from the Bursars of St John's and King's Colleges, both of them large holders of agricultural property in various English counties. Mr. R. F. Scott, the Bursar of St. John's, I was so unfortunate as to miss, as he was absent on business, but his assistant, Mr. Turner, was most kind in helping me. The college, he said, held 19,000 acres of land, on which the outgoings in 1900, including rates and taxes, amounted to £5,192 4s. 2d., the cost of upkeep being roughly £1,600. The rack rents due in the same year amounted to £15,509 and the arrears of rents to £2,045. In 1882 the rack rents amounted to £24,772 16s. and the arrears to £2,005 12s. 9d. Thus it would seem that in eighteen years the income of the college from agricultural sources had sunk by £9,263, that is, by about three-eighths—a heavy fall indeed.

King's College, Mr. C. E. Grant told me, about 85 per cent. of whose real holdings are agricultural land, received in

1871, when the tenants paid the tithe of about £3,000, an income of £28,000, and in 1900 an income of £19,600, exclusive of the tithe of £2,000 paid by the college, which represents a net drop of about 33 per cent. In 1871, however, the repairs and improvements were costing £1,500 per annum, whereas in 1900 they were costing the much larger figure of £3,500. Here are some specimen comparative rents of farms in different parts of England, most of which have been held by the college for the last 450 years.

In Cambridgeshire, an artificially drained farm of 230 acres of good land: 1871, £515; 1900, £250. Ditto in the Ely District: 144 acres, part fen. 1871, £254; 1900, £144. Norfolk, 512 acres. 1874, £737 plus tithe; 1900, £285 minus £100 tithe. Norfolk, near Beccles 230 acres light land with marshes. About 1870, £372; 1900, £172 minus £40 tithe. Norfolk, Toft Monks 250 acres. About 1870, £400; 1900, £150. Hampshire: 511 acres. About 1870, £720; 1900, £400 minus £118 tithe. Warwickshire. near Birmingham: 172 acres (an out-of-the-way farm). About 1870, £180; 1900, £76. Lincolnshire, near Brigg: 885 acres on cliff. Top rent, £1,500; 1900, £800, tithe free. South Wiltshire, 440 acres. Top rent, £298; 1900, £125. Another farm in Wiltshire that used to be corn land and is now under grass, 732 acres. Best rent, £440; 1900, £175 minus £64 tithe.

The college, Mr. Grant said, had not much land in hand, as it had always found farming a disastrous venture. Often there was a great difficulty in letting, Wiltshire being the worst county in which to find tenants. Thus near Swindon 3,000 acres were not bringing in £300 a year. Also fencing on the Down lands was a great and continual expense. Occasionally they sold land, but to do so it was necessary to obtain the consent of the Board of Agriculture. Mr. Grant was afraid of the labour difficulty, and thought that our system of rural education had taken a wrong turn. The fact was that owners were not able to pay high enough wages to keep people on the land. In addition to their real property the college was a large tithe owner, and of course had suffered

in this respect. As Mr. Grant informed me that on behalf of King's College he managed property in no fewer than fourteen counties, it is obvious that not many people can have more experience of the agricultural conditions prevailing in England.

At King's College I observed a curious example of the robber instincts of that mischievous bird the sparrow. Passing the door of the chapel I watched a pair of swifts entering a nest that they had built in the stonework crown at the top of the arch. Two days later I went by the place again and noted that a couple of sparrows had taken possession of the nest of the swifts, which were no longer to be seen. I believe that a reason for the marked decrease in the number of those lovely and most useful birds, the swifts and swallows, is to be found in the great increase of the worthless sparrow tribe, which drives them out of their breeding places, and even kills them. One of the signs of the prevailing depression of English agriculture is to be seen in the break-up of the old sparrow clubs which, in old days, accounted for the destruction of hundreds of thousands of these pests.

While at Cambridge I went over the jam factory and farms of Messrs. Chivers & Sons at the village of Histon, which is close to the outskirts of the city. The business dates almost from the beginning of the last century, when Mr. Stephen Chivers, the great-grandfather of the present proprietors, purchased some land at Histon, and his son, Mr. John Chivers, began to grow fruit, which was conveyed by waggon to London and there sold. His son developed the fruit-growing business, and in 1873 begun the manufacture of jam. Now the firm, which was turned into a private limited company in 1901, owns about 3,000 acres of land in this and other parishes, a large proportion of which is under fruit. Their output has doubled every five years for a long time past, and the proportions that it had reached at the time of my visit may be judged from the fact that according to the stationmaster's certificate, which I saw, the Great

Eastern Railway carried for them no less than 14,800 tons of goods, 7,558 of which represented produce sent out and 7,324 material coming in, such as glass, &c. To this company alone Messrs. Chivers paid £14,000 a year for transport expenses.

Over a thousand hands are employed here at an average inclusive wage of 15s. or 16s. a week for the outdoor people, and of 16s. to 20s. a week for those who labour in the works. The heads of departments and others in responsible posts receive, however, a great deal more. Mr. John Chivers told me that they had no difficulty about labour, and that they claimed to have brought a great many people back to the land. They employed 250 local women in the factory, while others were engaged to pick fruit, at which work they can earn from 1s. 6d. to 3s. a day. Thus a week before my visit a woman had taken 20s., while her husband only earned 14s. ; but this of course was during the picking seasons.

I think that the reason of the great and undoubted success of the Messrs. Chivers' factory, while so many started on similar lines throughout England have failed, is to be found in the fact that it has grown up gradually from small beginnings, and that its managers have the advantage of many years of accumulated experience. Also the firm, which only supplies the trade, has always been careful that the quality of its goods should be of the best. The factory itself, with its silver-lined boilers, its cooling rooms, its patent apparatus for filling the jars, its tramways, its printing and silver-plating, packing-case making, labelling, baking-powder, mincemeat, and 'Cambridge lemonade' departments, &c., was a truly wondrous place. Further it was fitted with every possible convenience, such as electric light throughout, and a shed where the goods were loaded direct on to the railway.

After we had inspected the factory, Mr. John Chivers kindly drove us through some of the fruit farms. Passing a little barn-like building where the jam was first made in

1873, we came to great stretches of orchard carrying very fair crops of fruit even in the bad year of 1901, when the drought was so sharp in the rain-lacking county of Cambridgeshire that the raspberry canes looked quite yellow. The aspect of the country, which here is Skirtland, was very flat, and the soil for the most part loam on clay and sand. On the first field we visited standard apples and greengages grew on grass, which was fed with sheep. Thirty years ago this field was under asparagus, then the fruit trees were planted with gooscherries between, which three years before had been stubbed up and the grass sown. The general idea seemed to be to plant with a view of turning the land into grass orchards, useful for sheep farming and cheap to manage, in a period of about thirty years. Thus some fields were set with standards and between them bush trees on paradise stocks that, as the standards grew, would be cut out.

Also there were great fields of raspberries, strawberries, and other fruits. After these strawberries have run their course of four or five years, a crop of beans or wheat is generally taken, when the land can, if necessary, be planted with strawberries again. Indeed, as at Tiptree, the principle is here recognised that it is a good thing to alternate small fruit crops with those of an ordinary character in order to give the soil rest and change. Thus at Histon, in addition to the wheat and beans, roots, lucerne, and oats were grown. Also to ensure the fertilisation of the fruit blossoms, there was a bee colony, which paid well, as it produced an average of two tons of honey a year. One of the advantages of fruit culture, considered from a general point of view, is, as Mr. Chivers pointed out, that whereas an ordinary farm of, say, 150 acres employs about five men, if the same area of land, or most of it, is under fruit, it furnishes work for twenty men.

Histon, which we passed through on our way to Impington, is remarkable for its neat thatched cottages and old-world village green, through which runs a brook. Here, too, was a wall built of mud and thatch, I think the first of the kind I had seen since leaving Wiltshire. At Impington, too,

were many good brick cottages, together with some capital villas which were let at a rent of about £10 a year to certain of the factory superintendents. These places, with their fruit orchards and market gardens, look singularly charming and prosperous. After this we saw more soft-fruit lands and orchards, mostly of a younger growth. Here were asparagus beds, stock being prepared for grafting, as the Messrs Chivers 'work' all their own trees, nurseries of young apples, acres of raspberries, &c. Also there were numbers of Pershore plums doing very well. The reader may remember that in Worcestershire the growers thought that this plum would not flourish out of the immediate neighbourhood. This, I think, is a mistake, as I have seen it in various other counties, although it is true that all soils and climates do not suit it equally well.

Such is a brief summary of what I saw at Histon. Of the excellent influence of this great factory upon the neighbourhood there can be no doubt. Thus at Cottenham, four miles away, a village that has paved streets and gas laid on to the houses, there are many small proprietors of from three to twenty acres, most of whom grow produce that is purchased by the Messrs. Chivers. As we passed the factory on our way back to Cambridge, I noticed that the collecting sheds were crowded with carts bringing in fruit from these and other small-holders, always assured of a ready and profitable market for their produce without carriage to pay or the intervention of the middleman. How powerfully such an establishment works for the well-being of a district will be readily understood by the reader. I only wish there were many more of them scattered through the length and breadth of England.

To my great regret I was prevented from staying in the Wisbech district of Cambridgeshire, famous for its small-holdings and fruit culture, although I passed through it and noted the industrious husbandmen at work on their plots of fruit, flowers and potatoes. Mr. A. E. Clarke, F.S.S., of Bank, Old Market, Wisbech, has, however, kindly furnished

me with an interesting report upon the neighbourhood, of which I quote the substance. He said that North Cambridgeshire and some parts of South Lincolnshire were among the best farmed districts in the country. There the old-fashioned ways had given place to more modern methods, and the landlords would keep a good tenant who farmed well, allowing him to do very much what he liked. The higher class of farmers, who were better instructed and more well-to-do than most, grew mustard, turnip, mangel-wurzel, cabbage, and other seeds. The mustard seed, which was also imported from Holland for grinding purposes, was a great feature early in October at the mustard market at Wisbech, the only one in England. Such seed crops in good years probably gave an average return of from £15 to £20 the acre. Potatoes were also grown in large quantities on the light and skirty lands, (though the fen-grown potatoes were not so good), and likewise realised from £15 to £20 the acre.

Within the last fifteen years fruit and flower culture had increased enormously, so that in 1901 from 4,000 to 5,000 acres in the neighbourhood of Wisbech were devoted to this trade. For the cultivation of strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, plums, apples, pears, onions, cauliflowers, asparagus, rhubarb, narcissus, pansies, and other flowers the soil was as good as that of Kent, and great quantities of all these products were grown and despatched to the large centres of population. The value per acre of the fruit and flower farms varied from £25 to £70, which was about the amount of capital required according to the class of produce grown. In the season of 1901 between sixty and seventy tons of strawberries, and from 130 to 140 tons of gooseberries had been despatched from Wisbech in a single day. The result of this industry was that the land had increased in value considerably during the past twenty years, and as much as £200 an acre had been given for choice holdings suitable to fruit culture.

It did not, he said, require a prophet to foretell what would be the consequence of such inflated prices. The

orchard ground planted with apples, pears, plums, and gooseberries might hold its own, as these fruits could be dealt with by the ordinary grower without haste or the need for any out-of-the-way ability, but the land that had been set with strawberries and raspberries was in a different position. These products were very perishable and must be picked and marketed quickly, also, judging by the dwindling prices which they commanded, the supply of them might exceed the demand. Moreover, so soon as the cost of these classes of fruit advanced to a certain figure, foreign 'pulp' was put upon the market in competition with them. It was therefore possible that some of the land devoted to their culture might in the end be once more used for the growing of ordinary farm crops. To be a successful producer of this 'soft fruit,' a man must be well known to and have a good connection among the buyers; he must have plenty of labour at his command, some education, untiring energy, and business-like habits. It would be seen, therefore, that very small farmers and labourers who plant little allotments with soft fruit, might easily make a mistake and lose money at the venture.

Fruit-growing was introduced into the locality sixteen or seventeen years ago by Mr. Bath, who when he observed that others began to follow his lead, gradually directed his attention to the raising of flowers, probably because he saw that in face of foreign competition it was possible to overdo the production of fruits. So far, however, the trade in fruit and flowers has added greatly to the prosperity of the district. Orchards with dwellings on them had sprung up all round the town, between 100 and 200 houses having been built in Wisbech itself during the previous three or four years. Also the population had increased considerably. Thus Walsoken had risen from 3,271 in 1891 to 3,750 in 1901, an increase of 479; and Wisbech from 9,394 in 1891 to 9,808 in 1901, an increase of 414. Whatever might be said of farmers in other parts of Cambridgeshire, those in the north of the county, who spent their money freely in labour

and manure, and brought to the business more than the usual intelligence, were, as they deserved to be, prosperous men.

Commenting on the remarks that had appeared from my pen as to the pressure of the copyhold tenure on small-holders, the Rev Francis C. Marshall, the Rector of Little Wilbraham, has furnished me with the following example of the working of the system. A few years since he bought five acres of land, of which less than half an acre was copyhold. He instructed his lawyer to enfranchise this small parcel, but the matter was overlooked or forgotten. Still, on admission to the said half-acre the lord's and steward's charges amounted to over £6, of which the larger part seemed to go to the steward. Also at the end of two years he received a request for quit-rent to the amount of three-pence per annum. Subsequently the college, which I suppose was the lord, requested him to enfranchise the land. He consented, and the cost of so doing exceeded £13, so that in all in order to free the half-acre or less from its copyhold obligations, he was obliged to pay away nearly £20. The price of the land was £50 per acre, thus its enfranchisement cost nearly as much as the fee-simple value. This land, I should add, was let for 50s. an acre as a garden, therefore the enfranchisement cost about sixteen years' rental. Surely it is scandalous that such extortion should be possible. Surely, also, this matter of copyhold demands the immediate attention of the State.

The position of Cambridgeshire agriculture varies so greatly according to the soils and conditions of the different districts, that to generalise upon them would be difficult if not impossible. I think, therefore, that it is wisest to leave the reader to form his own conclusions from the facts that I have adduced in the foregoing pages. Broadly, however, I may state that where the farms are large and corn is chiefly grown, there is little or no prosperity, while where they are small and assisted by pastures or fruit culture, both owners and tenants are doing fairly well.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE

MIDDLESEX and Rutland excepted, Huntingdonshire, with an area of about 234,000 acres, is the smallest county in England. Its length from north to south is thirty miles and its breadth from east to west twenty-three. The northern part of the county is chiefly fen-land, while the southern, which lies in the basin of the Ouse, is higher. The soil, especially in the middle of the shire, is Oxford clay, but varies a good deal; thus in the south-east there is much ironsand and gault, and in the north, stone-brash, the north-east being for the most part fen. Huntingdonshire, which is almost purely agricultural, produces the usual crops, including a great deal of wheat. There is also much grazing land on which many cattle are fatted. On the whole the county is not well supplied with water, for which the inhabitants in some parts are obliged to rely on ponds. The drained fen-land is very productive.

Between Cambridge and Sandy, in Bedfordshire, especially in the neighbourhood of the Old North Road, may be seen a stretch of land, of which the condition can fitly be described as awful. The soil is for the most part a heavy clay, and much of it has gone down into an apology for pasture, often so thickly studded with wild thorns and briars, that it looks like a game covert which has been recently planted. Here was a crop of beans, dwarfed, yellow, and devoured with black fly. Next to it, perhaps, appeared a field of corn, thin in growth, light in ear and straw, and, to judge from the docks and flowering thistles, innocent of the hoe. Beyond that, again, lay a fallow, or what was meant to be a fallow, but, having been left untouched since the

spring ploughing was now but a bed of weeds. Then another bean patch black with 'collier,' and one of the worst fields of wheat that I saw in all my travels, followed by more stretches of twitch and briar growing lovingly together, and by a scattered crop of wireworm-ravaged oats, enclosed with straggling, untended fences. It is of this district that Mr. W. M. Tod, of E. Hatley, Sandy, Beds, wrote to me. 'Thousands of acres round here are quite or very nearly derelict, and the farmhouses, buildings, and cottages are slowly rotting down. It is a remarkable sight for so thickly populated a country as ours. All this land was cultivated and grew good crops up to the eighties. Here and there are oases that show what the land was—and is.'

After Gamlingay and in the neighbourhood of Potton the land is evidently better, and, notwithstanding the effects of drought upon the sandy soil, the country looked much more hopeful, potatoes being a large crop, and the patches of market-garden stuff numerous. Indeed, this is a market-gardening centre, 120 trucks of produce leaving Potton daily during the season for London, in addition to fifty trucks which pass over the Great Northern line from Sandy station, together with much more from sidings and other stations. It is also a stronghold of small cultivators who grow vegetables upon holdings of land, varying in size from one up to twenty acres, or even more.

Beyond Sandy there is more bad land; indeed, between Tempsford and Potton lies a breadth of country that, considered from an agricultural point of view, may be called shocking. The rent of some of it in this neighbourhood was said to be as low as 2s. 6d. per acre.

At the village of Croxton, in Cambridgeshire, on the borders of Huntingdonshire, in connection with which county I shall treat of her evidence, our host was Mr. Robert Cochrane, whose daughter, Miss Constance Cochrane, is so well and honourably known for her strenuous and unselfish advocacy of the cause of the 'improvement of rural dwellings. In pursuit of this end Miss Cochrane has

written various pamphlets, has appeared as a witness before district Councils and other authorities, and, in person or by deputy, at her own expense, has visited or collected information from scores of parishes throughout England. This is no light task for a lady to undertake, and she spoke to me with feeling of what she had suffered in its execution. To be called meddling and to be told to mind her own business seemed to be with her a somewhat common experience. In my view, however, it reflects great honour upon Miss Cochrane that in pursuit of a work which she knows to be good she is willing to endure much hardness.

Few questions are surrounded with greater difficulties than this of the housing of labourers in rural parishes. As a class they are not desirable tenants, and the rent that they pay is very low. To build a pair of good cottages, with three bedrooms each, at the present price of labour and materials, costs from £300 to £400, according to design and accommodation—generally nearer £400 than £300. Supposing that the average rent paid is 2s. a week—and in villages it does not often amount to more, generally to less indeed—the reader can work out for himself what interest, after allowing for upkeep and repairs, this income is likely to return on the capital invested. It may be said that the erection of such necessary buildings ought not to be looked upon as an investment, but if this aspect of the case is to be disregarded, it follows that the builder must be in a position to afford the sinking of the necessary capital.

Now, taking the country through, what proportion of the owners of property are so happily placed in these times of landed depression? It may be said again—and I think with justice—that, in view of the urgent need of keeping population on the land, and of providing men and women with decent homes, this is a national rather than an individual question, and that where the individual is powerless to remedy or abate the evil, the nation, in its own interest, should come to his assistance.

Well, to a certain extent it recognises the obligation.

That is to say, under the provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890, the Public Works Loan Commissioners are empowered to advance money for the purpose of constructing or improving dwellings for the working classes to any company, society, or private person. But consider the terms 'The loan so made is to bear interest at not less than £3 2s. 6d per cent. per annum,' or at such other rate of interest 'as the Treasury may from time to time authorise as being in their opinion sufficient to enable such loans to be made without loss to the Exchequer.' Moreover, it is provided amid a mass of other stipulations that 'the period for the repayment of the sums advanced shall not exceed forty years.'

It is obvious that these advantages, if they can be so called, are not sufficient to induce anybody who cannot afford to do so from his own pocket, to lay out money in building cottages.

Indeed, I believe I am right in saying that, so far as the rural districts are concerned, the Act is practically a dead letter. Surely the terms ought to be widened, at any rate to the extent of lengthening the period of repayment to sixty years, making the $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. a maximum rate not variable at the option of the Commissioners, and enacting that a sufficient proportion of the interest received should go to a sinking-fund account, which at the expiration of the sixty years would extinguish the debt. That something of the sort is needed must be obvious to any who have taken the trouble to read the writings of Miss Cochrane and other authorities, and that it is needed in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, and other places that I have seen, I am prepared to bear witness from the evidence of my own eyes.

On one day of our stay with her father, Miss Cochrane conducted us to visit some dwellings at Eltisley, on the Cambridgeshire border, a few of which I will briefly describe.

No. 1, thatched, built of cracked and ancient stud-work, contained one bed-room, one sitting-room, and one lean-to scullery. The bedroom in the roof which was stopped with rags to keep out the rain, was approached by a steep

ladder, the woman who led me there crawling upon her hands and knees into the apartment, where she slept with the daughter of a neighbour, who, since Miss Cochrane stirred in these matters, passed the nights here. This girl's previous bedroom had been shared with her father, a widower, in the next cottage. I should add that she was grown up.

In the sitting-room below slept an ancient bed-ridden woman of ninety-eight and, I think, a daughter-in-law, who was staying with her. It is right to say, however, that this cottage, which belonged to one of the Cambridge colleges, was given to these people rent free until the old woman dies. In my judgment it ought not to be inhabited at all. This old lady's husband had died not long before, aged ninety-nine. I was told that Mr. Terence Hooley had promised to give him £10 if he lived to 100. When he deceased a little short of the appointed age, his daughter, who showed us the cottage, said to Miss Cochrane: 'Lord! I did try hard to keep him alive to get that there £10.' I remember that this same good lady grumbled to us upon the subject of her aged mother, who lay in the bed and gave her, she said, 'a deal of trouble to look after.'

The poor are frequently somewhat callous where their sick or aged relatives are concerned. Some years ago, in the village of Ditchingham, an old woman, who was said to be 102, lived with a niece or a grand-niece. One day I passed the cottage and found this ancient dame hobbling about the garden in a great state of distress. In answer to my inquiries she informed me that her niece had put out her bit of fire—I suppose the only thing she could enjoy. Moved by compassion I interviewed the niece, who did not receive my remonstrances in a conciliatory spirit. Indeed, she became positively violent in her remarks concerning her antique relative and her ways. I rejoined that the very aged had a right to every care and affection. 'Very well,' she answered, 'if you are so fond of the nasty old thing, take and look after her yourself!'

Cottage No. 2, where lived the widower and his daughter, was, I considered, not fit for human habitation.

No. 3—A row of cottages of small size. Until Miss Cochrane induced a neighbouring landowner to grant a strip of ground at the back, upon which the necessary out-buildings and conveniences now stand, these dwellings were confined between the main road and a large open ditch upon the edge of which their back walls were built. Into this ditch ran all the sewage and other refuse. They were known as the 'Eltisley death-trap,' and their back windows could not be opened because of the stench.

No. 4 (which I did not enter).—A small two-roomed cottage. Seven children were reared in the bedroom, and at one time four children slept there for a period of three months while the parents lay sick in bed. It was impossible to wash the floor, as the water ran between the boards into the sitting-room below.

No. 5 (then empty).—Two rooms and no outhouse or pantry. I measured the upstairs room. At the floor line it was 17 ft. 7 in. by 9 ft., but as the roof sloped the space above was not so large. The window was 24 inches by 18 inches. In this room eight children were reared with their parents. In the sister cottage adjoining, also two-roomed, lived seven children and their parents, making for the four rooms a total of nineteen, whose water supply was a filthy hole in the garden. Now water can be fetched from a well some 600 yards away.

The occupants of one of the cottages in this village, most of whose children are now out in the world, informed me that when they told the landlord or his agent—I forget which—that Miss Cochrane said they ought to have a third room, he replied politely: 'That be d——d for a tale!'

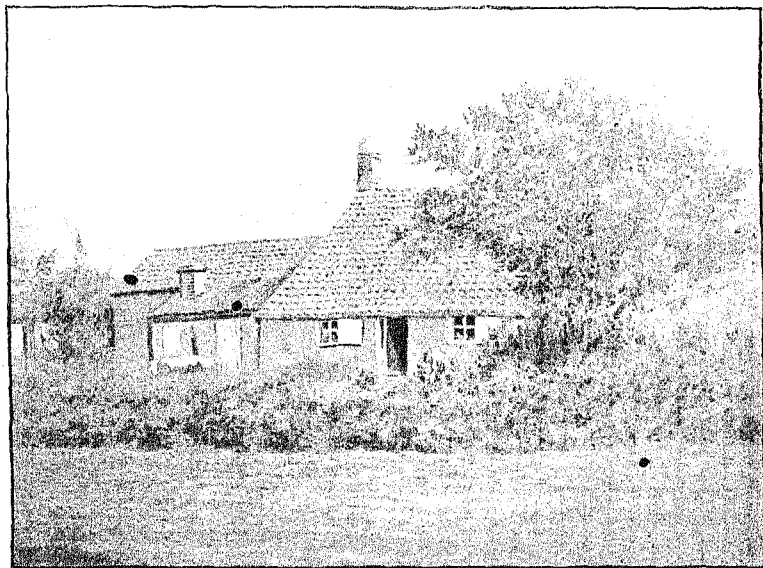
No. 6.—Here a grown-up sister, whom I saw, and two brothers, one of them adult, slept in the same room. The law only takes notice of overcrowding, not of the mixture of the sexes, and, I may add, that the law, whatever it is, is rarely enforced—at any rate in these parts.

Of the delightful dwellings of Eltisley these samples may suffice, but Miss Cochrane informed us that at Yelling, in Huntingdonshire, where I saw some of them, they were as bad, and at Great and Little Eversden, Burnough Green, and other parishes even worse. That things had improved in Eltisley itself, was, I gathered, although she was too modest to admit it, entirely owing to her exertions. Miss Cochrane mentioned one instance of overcrowding, with which she was personally acquainted, where a house belonging to a Cambridge college was inhabited two years before my visit, by a man, his wife, and nine children, one of them a new-born baby, all sleeping in a single room. Over the bed was a shelf upon which stood uncorked bottles of honey ready for market. Probably somebody bought that honey! Miss Cochrane made representations, and ultimately new cottages were built.

In curious contrast with these dreadful habitations were the picturesque and charming houses erected, at a cost, it is said, of about £600 a pair, by Mr. Terence Hooley, a great farmer and purchaser of land in this neighbourhood. These, to judge from the specimens I saw, were ideal—indeed, it would not be too much to call them fancy dwellings, very attractive in appearance, with steep tiled roofs, and every conceivable outhouse and advantage. Such buildings, however, are a luxury for the fortunate tenants of very rich men. No ordinary landowner can hope to rival them. The generality of those to be found in the neighbourhood are of a different type.

In the district of St. Neots I visited or had interviews with a considerable number of landowners, farmers, and small-holders, so many, indeed, that it is not easy to know of which of them to write. I begin with Mr. Tom Stone as a representative of the labouring and small-holders section.

— Mr. Stone, the assistant overseer to the parish of Croxton, who was gardener to our host, Mr. Cochrane, and a very good gardener, too, also managed a public-house, to which was attached some land which he intended to work when he



SMALL-HOLDER'S COTTAGE, DOWNHAM

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ANCIENT FARMHOUSE, TOSELAND, HUNTINGDONSHIRE

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gave up gardening, as he expected to do ere long. Here is his life history as he told it to me. He was the son of a labourer in Wiltshire, one of nine children. He said that he never tasted meat until he was grown up. His breakfast used to consist of skim-milk and bread, his midday meal of cheese and bread, his tea of bread-and-butter. On such nourishment he did not attain his proper growth, and so remained somewhat stunted in stature. His father, who received miserable wages, was always in debt, and the constant work and anxiety of their position killed his mother. In those days he remarked, although they did not do so, the farmers were able to pay more; indeed, many of them made fortunes. One of his late employers, for instance, saved £50,000 'out of the pinching of our stomachs.' Then, he said, it was the fashion to starve the man and take all his work, but now 'it has turned right round. They'—that is, the labourers—'are masters of the situation, and the landlord is the worst man of the lot.' When he was eleven years of age Mr. Stone began his labour at four, in the morning and received in return a wage of 1s a week.

He added that he did not want to be bitter about those days, but the memory of them left 'a nasty smack in the mouth.' Of the labourers as they are to-day—and this is interesting as coming from one of their own class—he could tell little that was good. All the best men he declared went away, as travelling facilities were easy, and those that were single could earn more money in the towns. The remainder who stayed did less work for a larger wage. He gave an instance of a man whom he had hired to dig in his garden for one day at a price of 3s. When he returned in the evening he found that he had not done a shilling's worth of work; in short, as he put it, that he had robbed him of 2s. of his capital. For this state of affairs, however, he thought that the farmers were to blame in part, since the labourer remembered that when they could pay they did not pay, and he was now settling the debt. He believed that the old stamp of farmer must die out, and that the land must

be worked with more skill and science by those who make a study of its treatment and capacities.

Mr. Stone was a great supporter of small freeholds or tenancies, and went so far as to assert that they would bring back prosperity to the country districts. As it was, he pointed out, the labouring man has nothing to look forward to, allotments being practically a failure, since 'no one can do a fair day's work for a farmer and another for himself.' He thought, also, that the transfer of land should be made easy and the system of copyhold tenure abolished. In support of this he advanced his own case, which was very similar to that of the Rev. F. C. Marshall in Cambridgeshire and others that I have quoted. Before he could obtain admission to a little plot of one and a half acres, which he had purchased out of his savings, he was obliged to pay £7 or £8 for fine and transfer fees, and, if he wished to extinguish the copyhold, must find £26 more. He complained also that the salaries connected with local institutions and administration eat up one-third of the amounts levied, thus before the poor-rate gets to the pauper 'it is pretty well sifted.' Mr. Stone advocated no violent or revolutionary remedies, only that the land and its workers should have a good chance. He did not even suggest Protection, although he held that every possible means should be taken to improve the intelligence of the working classes. I may add that he struck me as a person of singular ability by aid of which he has raised himself to his present level, and the words that came out of his mouth were, in my opinion, words of wisdom.

Mr. G. F. Rowley, of Priory Hill, St. Neots, owned, I think, some 3,000 acres, of which he had in hand 800 to 1,000. He had farmed for a great many years, both in good and bad times, and thoroughly understood the business. He stated that the fall in rental value was enormous, in some cases as much as 100 per cent.—that is to say, the owner received nothing—except the demand notes for the tithe. The rents in that district he put at from 5s. to 25s. the

acre, according to the quality of the land, facility of transport, and general amenities. The selling values were, however, distinctly better than they had been, land at Great Paxton fetching £20 the acre, and stiff freehold soil £17 the acre. Farms also let much better to a tolerable class of tenant, though not one in a dozen of them, however, had enough capital. Also he said that it was common for the new men to stop but a short while on their holdings the old class of tenant would cling to his farm until he died there financially, but when he found things going against him the new-comer disappeared. Mr. Rowley added that those landlords who were dependent on their land were nearly extinct; indeed, it would scarcely be too much to describe them as 'done and gone.'

The local labour market, in his opinion, was ruled by the condition of the Peterborough brickworks. Since the falling off of the brick trade and the completion of some railway alterations, men had been plentiful, but in the back lands employers were really pushed for labour, and the villages round about had gone down 25 per cent. in population. Indeed, he asserted that the way in which men were leaving the rural parishes was 'appalling,' and that no Government has ever before had to face such a problem. I may add, however, that the Government shows no sign of facing this problem. Mr. Rowley only believed in small ownerships where the land was very good. Where it is but ordinary or heavy, the small-holder was killed by the labour. To succeed he must be helped by the quality of the soil. With reference to the general position, he declared that they could not farm against the seasons; they tried to raise green crops and animals, but could do neither in such times of drought. Still, scorching weather was a fertiliser, and they hoped for better things. On the whole, he took a black view of the future, in which he could see nothing encouraging. 'We live and die in hope, and that is the end,' was Mr. Rowley's conclusion.

Mr. Alfred Main, who lived in an ancient and beautiful

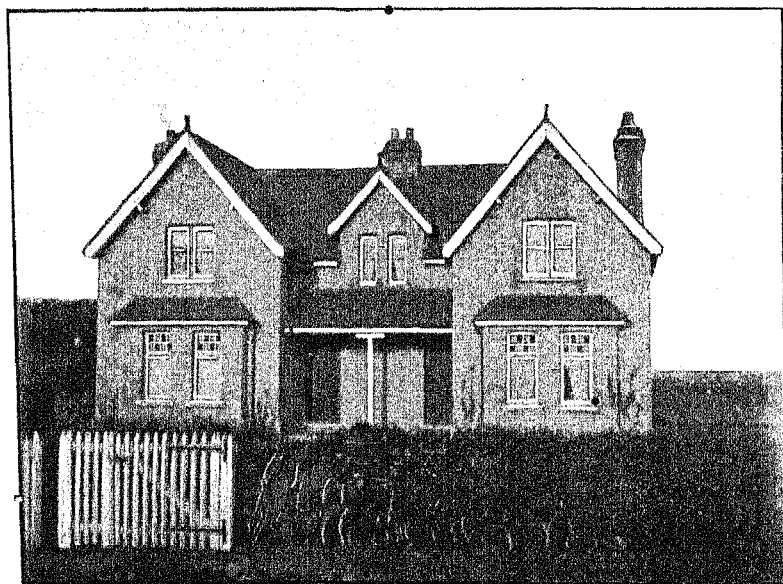
Tudor house, farmed 500 acres of clay land at Toseland, which his father held before him. He estimated the rent of the general run of land in that neighbourhood at about 12s. the acre, but I gathered that he paid more than this himself. In the neighbouring parish of Graveley he instanced a farm of 500 acres, which used to be let at £1, but then brought in only 5s. the acre. His land will not lay down well to grass; indeed, he doubted if it would make a pasture in fifty years, and some specimens which he showed us led me to believe that this view is accurate. The soil is very stiff, so stiff, indeed, that he said he had known sheep to lie down and stick to the land. Water also was scarce, and there were no deep wells. He found labour in his district rather short, and more cottages were wanted. That, however, he added, was not the only reason why people went; they migrated in search of excitement and more money. Young women were in great demand, but single or married they continued to go, and the latter took their rising families with them. They were, Mr. Main said, shorter of boys than of any other class; only the old men knew their work, the young ones were not so good. The wages were 14s. or 15s. for the best men, perhaps with harvest and other extras, 17s. inclusive. He did not think that farms let quite so readily as they used to do, but there were many occupations of from twenty to thirty acres which were taken by labouring men who worked them themselves. Farmers, he considered, made a living and no more.

With the exception of a good field of oats grown after a dead fallow, Mr. Main's crops did not look very well owing to the drought, and his grass, of which he had eighty acres, was a good deal burned. Although he sometimes took two white straws in succession, in general he farmed on the four-course shift, growing in addition a considerable breadth of lucerne. He kept a flock of cross-bred ewes, which were wintered on the grass lands, but in past years used to have Leicesters, that, as he said, produced twice the wool which could then be sold at double the present price. The only



ELTISLEY COTTAGES


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A PAIR OF MR. TERENCE HOOLEY'S MODEL COTTAGES

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roots that he grew were mangolds; also he had beans, but in 1901 they were very foul with the fly.

On Mr. Mann's farm I saw, for the second time in the course of my late travels, some of the S lands which are common in Huntingdon, Oxford, Leicester, Northampton, and other counties, and excite, I believe, much controversy among the learned. The peculiarity of these 'lands,' or 'stetches,' as we should call them in Norfolk, is that they are shaped like an inverted S—thus —curving towards the end of the furrows, and have so curved for generations—I am told since the Saxon or early British times. The only feasible explanation that I can offer of this curious and ancient peculiarity is, that it was caused by the shrinking of the long teams of oxen from the whip of the driver, but whether it is the correct one I have no idea. Of course, when once the land had taken this formation subsequent cultivators were unwilling to disturb it for fear of bringing the dead soil to the top by ploughing down to the deep furrows between them—at least so it is asserted.

Mr. J. C. Nelson, writing to me from East London, South Africa, gives the following interesting illustration of this theory. He says: 'When you state that these S lands are supposed to have been established in the days when long teams of oxen were used for ploughing, it would seem that they are fairly ancient, &c. In South Africa, where, as you know, long teams of oxen are still in use for ploughing, and still the *best* team for the *country*, and where the land ploughed may be, and often is, situated on the open veld, with no fences and no headlands whatever, it still rests with the driver and "voorlooper," or leader, as to whether the end of the furrow should be straight or curved, because immediately the front oxen get out at the end they will, if not sharply watched, begin to turn round in order to enter the return furrow, and if so allowed will pull round the hind oxen while still far from the end, thus finishing with a very large curve. It is simply bad driving here. Do you

see any other probable reason for such lands, or any object to be served ?'

I confess that I do not, but as to the great antiquity of these curious 'lands,' I shall have something to say when treating of Northamptonshire.

One gentleman who had studied the subject told me that these 'curly furrows' are only to be found on stiff clays, that they were due to the turning of long teams of oxen and dated, he believed, from the Roman times. On this subject Mr. Roland E. Prothero, M.A., in an article upon 'English agriculture in the reign of Queen Victoria,' published in the 'Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England' for 1901, speaking of the rural conditions which still prevailed in the year 1837, says: 'In the remote parts of the country, even on light soils and for summer work, heavy ploughs slowly drawn by teams of five horses or six oxen, attended by troops of men or boys, still lumbered on their laborious way following the sinuous shape of boundary fences, or throwing up ridges crooked like an inverted S, in order to give the teams room to turn at the headlands, and laid wide and high by successive ploughings towards the crown, so as to get rid of the surface water before the use of under-drainage was understood.'

It will be seen that Mr. Prothero's explanation of these curious lands is much the same as that I have advanced above, which is so strangely borne out by Mr. Nelson's observation in South Africa.

Mr. Main showed us also a plant of white briony growing on a heap of rubbish in a field which, he believed, had caused the death of a cow that ate it. I never knew before that this herb was poisonous to cattle. He said that there was no tithe in that parish, and no clergyman; also that not many gentlefolk resided in the neighbourhood. Mr. Main told us, I regret to say, that he did not look forward with any confidence to the future of agriculture or of the land.

Mr. W. Seymour, of Croxton, a small-holder, held two acres of land at a rent of 16s. an acre. He had no outbuild-

ings and as a consequence, was obliged to store his corn in his house. He said that if these were provided he would be willing to pay £1 an acre, but that 30s. was too high a rent. He kept twelve hives of bees that yielded him 200 lbs of honey, which he had sold in 1900 at sixpence a pound for run honey and eightpence a pound in the comb. The average local wage he put at 13s. a week, with £8 for harvest. He informed me that labourers were better satisfied than they had been five or six years before, when their wage was put back to 9s. a week. They went to the towns because they liked 'to handle the big money.' Thus his brother-in-law, who was away, earned 30s a week, and he mentioned a young man who, after four years' work in a city, had £50 in the bank. He had rarely known a married woman who wanted to go to London; on the other hand the London married women would not settle in the country. The young men were not going so fast as they used to do, and several had come back.

He thought that a labourer ought to be paid according to his work, but he saw the difficulty of preferential wages. In that neighbourhood the old men were the best men. As regarded small-holdings and ownerships, he believed that many people would be glad to become owners, and that those who really worked on a small-holding could make it successful. It was the people who did not work, or who did not understand the land, that failed.

Mr. William Fox, whom I saw labouring upon his allotments, farmed twelve acres. He said that when he started he had £1 capital, but that he kept on taking the allotments which were given up by others, adding, 'I'll have a living somehow. I'm not afraid, I ain't a-going to grumble.' Truly an excellent spirit. He did all his work himself, I think with the help of two of his sons who were at home. Another son was in America, and a fourth in Manchester. He told me that a good many young men went away, but some came back, though not the best of them. He did not know why the young ones would not work as the old people used to do. 'If it was all bicycling, they would have a bit

of land. Those who went away thought that there was something better abroad, and many of them had found out their mistake. There was reason in everything, he said, and to want to get on without effort was not reasonable. When a man could do without work he should lay it down, and not before. There was a living to be made out of the land by those who persevered, but he did not think that there would be much demand for small-holdings about Croxton. He paid 26s. an acre rent—twice as much, I gathered, as the farmers did—which Mr. Fox, not unnaturally, seemed to think unfair. His potatoes looked very uneven, owing to the drought; but he said, with characteristic cheerfulness, that when a rain fell, the late ones might be as good as the foremost.

Miss Cochrane told me that Mr. Fox had brought up a large family in one bedroom. I was also informed of the curious fact that in this village of Croxton the people who had done best were nearly all dissenters. Here, as in Essex, I noticed, by the way, that the trees were dying for lack of moisture.

Mr. Manning, an old gentleman whom I saw at Toseland, was a small-holder of twenty acres. He told me that his rent was about £1 an acre, and that if the land 'is not worth that it is worth nothing.' He started with no money at all, and at the following Michaelmas was, on account of age, giving over to his sons the holding which he had worked for thirty-four years. Mr. Manning mentioned five small-holders in the village, but said that he did not think there was any further demand for such tenancies, although some grasped at them who had not the 'possible' to carry them on. He informed me that the farmers were short of hands at times, as, owing to the young people going away to the big towns and leaving the 'poorer lot' behind, they could not get enough labour. Also there were no girls about. He thought, however, that those who had a desire to go would be of no use upon the land. He knew what a bit of land was, and was very fond of it, but *they* took more interest in the streets.

This village of Toseland was very badly off for water. On or near Mr. Manning's holding I noticed a well twenty feet deep which was fed by the water that filtered to it from the roadside ditch.

Mr. Green, whom I saw at Yelling, had no prosperous tale to tell. He farmed 100 acres, of which eighteen were grass that he took in 1879. Then the rent was 30s. the acre; now, he said, it was not half as much. He added that the 'rent don't matter; it is the price of corn,' and that 'this poor old land about here is dear at a gift.' It took farmers all their time to make a living. Of labour he seemed to have a sufficiency, but he told us that several of the hands about there were old, and that the best of the young men 'took to the towns.' He thought that the season of 1901 would be very bad, as the beans were poisoned with fly, and they were so short of clover and grass that he only secured three loads of hay from five acres of laid-down pasture. He kept eleven or twelve head of cow stock, and his course was: 1, fallow; 2, barley; 3, beans or clover; 4, wheat. The periodical fallow was quite necessary on that land, he declared. Mr. Green could see no prospect unless the wheat was going to yield well and fetch a better price. Of straw there would be little.

I observed that in this neighbourhood the troublesome rosy-flowered, spiky weed, here known indifferently as whin, liquorice, or rest-harrow (*Ononis spinosa*), was very common.

Mr. Eastes, who for many years had been schoolmaster at Yelling and had acted also as Miss Cochrane's agent in investigating the rural housing question in various English counties, told me that a good many of the young people, both boys and girls, had gone away, only the most ignorant remaining on the land. Still so far as his knowledge went the exodus had not increased of late years. The population of Yelling, which used to be 316, had fallen to 242. Formerly thirty pupils attended his night school, but in 1891 there were only thirteen. At least half of the young people, whom he had taught, and the best half, had departed to the

towns. The children, to say the least, were not bright, a fact which the school inspectors were apt to mention when they visited the place. Those who remained were sufficient for the labour requirements, indeed if there were more hands in the district, they would be out of work, as used to be the case when they sometimes had thirteen or fourteen men standing about without employment.

The young men, Mr. Eastes said, did not marry much, as there were no cottages for them to live in, and in Yelling alone, where many of the houses were not fit for habitation, four had been condemned. He considered that the working-man should be provided with a house and not with a hovel. Of the local morality he could not speak highly. There were many good farmers in the neighbourhood who in average years made a living, raising stock and using a great deal of their own produce. It was not uncommon for landlords who desired to secure a suitable tenant, to allow him to have the holding rent free for one or two years. His opinion was that things agricultural were on the mend locally, but the labourer was master of the situation. Allowing for everything he did not earn much less than £1 a week, the cottage accommodation being really the only matter of which he had to complain.

Miss Cochrane confirmed Mr. Eastes' opinion as to the lack of cottages preventing the marriage of many young people in the villages. She said that this was her experience, and the result was that they went away to towns. Also owing to the overcrowding the elder sons were ejected, and having nowhere to live must go away. Many of these cottages were in the hands of speculative tradesmen, who did not make good landlords. The consequences of people desiring to marry, and not being able to do so, might be imagined.

Mr. Harvey Cardell, of the Manor Farm, Great Paxton, whom I saw, was a Cornish gentleman who had been farming for eight years in Huntingdonshire. He said that the reason he had left Cornwall was because the rents were so

high and the competition for land there was as bad as in Ireland. Labour was much more plentiful than it had been two or three years before, when the Great Northern Railway was doubling its lines, and all available hands were absorbed. Then bricks were 26s a thousand, but in 1901 they had fallen 10s. or more, with the result that in one village which he knew near some brickworks, there were sixty cottages to let. Still all the best young people went, the infirm in body and mind staying behind. The cottages in his district he characterised as 'simply disgraceful,' saying that the sanitary laws were not enforced, and the general desire seemed to be to employ as inspectors those men who would do least. Most landlords had no money to build new cottages, and the old ones fell down.

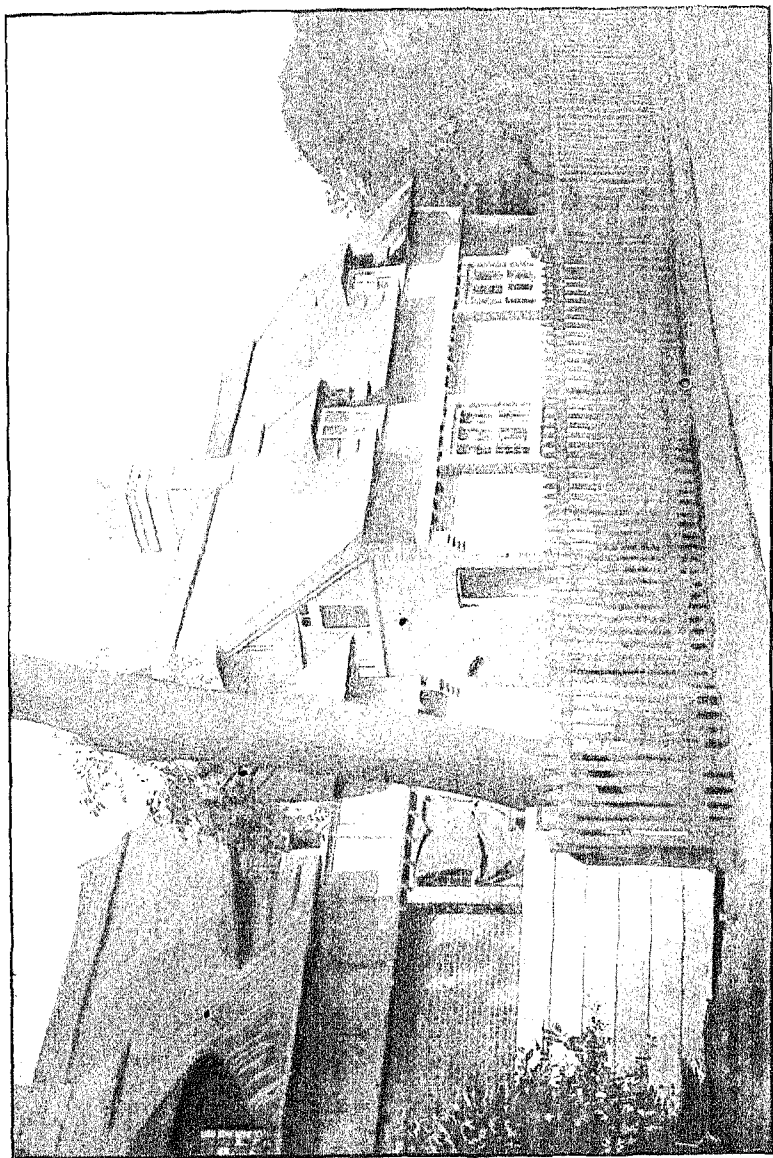
He did not look forward to the future with any confidence, and complained that tenants had no security of tenure, although it seemed to me, in face of what I heard of the cheap rates at which land could be hired in Huntingdonshire, and the general anxiety on the part of owners to find suitable men to farm it, that this could scarcely be called a grievance. I imagine few good tenants receive notice to quit in that county. Mr. Cardell made one remark which struck me as wise. He said that what you sowed on the land did not much matter; what did matter was the way you treated it after it had been sown.

Messrs. John and Isaac Hall, market-gardeners, of Eynesbury, St. Neots, whom I had the pleasure of meeting, gave me a good deal of valuable information as to the condition of their industry. They were brothers, and said that they began with a rood of land and thought themselves big men when they had two roods. Then after twenty years they were working between 400 and 500 acres, and, I was told, doing well. Their own words were, 'We are making a comfortable living.' They said there was not much to boast of in farming, but those who did the land very well might make a little better than a living. The best of the market-garden land near St. Neots fetched a rent of from £2 to £3

the acre, and was in demand. Many people also were starting in the neighbourhood of Sandy, where the rents ran from £4 to £6 the acre, and the market garden trade was on the increase. They did well. Labouring men in their district often had an acre under crop and brought the produce to them (the Messrs. Hall), who marketed it on their account. Parsley, they said, had grown to a big trade, and so had Brussels sprouts. The production of some such vegetables might be increased, although they did not think that there was room for any great development of the industry in that locality. They ought to grow 100 acres of onions at Eynesbury, but could not find the labour to enable them to do so.

The ordinary agricultural wage was 15s. a week, but men could earn more than that at piecework. A good many of them went away to the towns in order to enjoy 'liberty and life,' and, said the Messrs. Hall, 'they will starve in London rather than come back to the land.' Sandy was badly off for good cottages, which commanded from £4 to £7 a year rent, the old mud dwellings being about worn out. The Messrs. Hall declared that if forty new ones were built there, they would all be taken immediately; but at St. Neots and Eynesbury there were a good many old cottages standing empty. At Buckden, five miles from St. Neots, the landowners would not build cottages because they did not pay, and as the land was good it let without them.

In addition to the vegetables already mentioned, they grew early potatoes, onions, marrows, &c., with the help of London manure, which cost them 1s. 6d. a ton to buy, and 2s. 10d. a ton to carry. They pointed out, however, that in their business the marketing had to be considered as well as the growing, and that those who did not wish to lose money should know the men whom they employed to sell their stuff upon commission. The year of 1901 was, the Messrs. Hall said, very bad owing to the drought, so bad indeed that not more than 100 tons were going away, where the normal amount would be 300; indeed, there was not much above, say, two-fifths of a crop.



While staying with my cousin, Mr. Herbert Jones, at Huntingdon I saw various farmers in that neighbourhood. Amongst them was Mr Cranfield, senior, whose great farms, extending, I believe, over thousands of acres, were then for the most part carried on by his sons and son-in-law.

Mr. Cranfield, whose active connection with the industry had ceased, and who, therefore, might be presumed to speak of it with complete impartiality, during the past half-century or longer had held farms in no fewer than five counties. He took a most gloomy view of the future of agriculture, and said that all the prosperous upland farmers of that neighbourhood, by which he meant those who were in a position to retire, could be counted on his fingers. Of the new race of farmer he had a poor opinion—of course with exceptions. Many of them, he declared, took land without sufficient capital, ‘£10 an acre it ought to be, but it is nearer 10s. an acre; sold all they could get off it, and called it farming.’ Mr. Cranfield called it land-skinning, which, he said, was an art thoroughly understood in that and neighbouring counties. Even at the prevailing prices he held that wheat paid better than any other corn crop, but of grass, said that it was useless, adding, ‘If you can tell me how to dribble milk (*i.e.* keep cows) at $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ a gallon, I shall be much obliged to you.’ He declared that if the increased cost of labour was added to the rent, the two together were higher than ever they had been.

As for the labour, there was everything in the world to take it away, although it could still be found by those who gave a higher wage than others. But what, queried Mr. Cranfield, is the use of paying money that you have not earned? His conclusion seemed to be that sooner or later most of the land will go out of cultivation and be used as stock-runs. He said that he had told us neither more nor less than what he thought, but I am bound to add that, in my opinion, if I may set it up against that of a gentleman of such vast experience, his views were too pessimistic.

At Buckden, where the soil is clay with a stiff clay subsoil,

four miles from Huntingdon, I went over the great farms of Mr. Henry Cranfield, the son of the gentleman whose views I have just recorded. Mr Cranfield, junior, held 2,220 acres, in the working of which £24,000 of capital were invested. He told us that on an average perhaps he made £1,000 a year, I understood, of profit. Now £1,000 is about 4 per cent. interest on £24,000, which interest could be earned by judicious investment of capital in safe securities. Therefore Mr. Cranfield received no return at all for his skill and labour. Still he was doing a great deal better than many farmers, and, as he remarked, the position of his landlord was worse than his own, since the tenant could go out of the business, but the landlord could not. I understood that these farms were held under the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. In 1873 they seem to have commanded a rent of 70s. the acre, but in the bad times, although they were not bound to do so, since the tenant held under lease, the Commissioners reduced it to 28s.

Mr Henry Cranfield said that the rural exodus from those parts had lessened in severity in the previous five years. In that parish the men did not go away much; they shifted into the employ of the local bricklayers. Personally he had only lost two men, who went to the railway, and they were back in six months' time. Notwithstanding all the introduction of machinery, at an average price of 32s an acre, his labour cost him more than it had cost his forbears fifty years earlier. He was glad that the labourers should be better off, but he would, he confessed, like to 'grade up' with them.

In conjunction with the Huntingdonshire farm, there was one of 100 acres of grass in Leicestershire, to which his cattle went to finish after they had been worked up in the yards. This farm his father bought for £80 the acre, and after its purchase was offered £100 the acre. Now it was, he said, worth about £40 the acre only, Leicestershire having been very hard hit by the depression. Wheat was still his best crop; in a bad year he grew about 1,800 quarters, and

in a good one 2,200. He also raised a quantity of clover seed; in 1900 £1,000 worth, and in 1899 £1,500 worth.

Upon compulsory education Mr Cranfield held strong views, believing that on the whole it was doing a great deal of damage to England, and that it was a form of coercion worse than anything that Ireland had ever experienced. In education itself he had every faith, but he thought that the responsibility of applying it should rest upon the shoulders of parents. The labouring and artisan classes had been given the franchise and were politically equal to anyone in the land. Why, then, should they be dictated to as to the amount of education which they must or must not give to their children? It was a matter of which they and they alone had the right to judge.

The argument is ingenious and plausible, but I imagine, scarcely likely to find acceptance now-a-days. I think also that I see two answers. First, that by the exercise of their franchise these classes have in the main declared in favour of a system of compulsory education; and secondly, that it is not a principle of law that individuals should allow their private whim or opinion to interfere with the welfare of the nation. Until recently this was recognised even in such a matter as compulsory vaccination, although it is true that if vaccination is no more to be enforced because it excites prejudice, it would seem logical that universal education should not be enforced for a similar reason. Doubtless there are as many conscientious objectors to compulsory learning as to calf lymph.

Of cottages Mr. Cranfield said that in his neighbourhood there were plenty; indeed, owing to the shrinkage of the rural population in some places, more than there existed inhabitants to fill them. He added that he could show us land in Huntingdonshire nearly as derelict as that in some parts of Essex. Mr Henry Cranfield declared that in farming, as in other businesses, the man who made money was he who adapted his education and knowledge to the needs of the moment, that every man should understand the profession

he was to follow before he was twenty, and that no man could be a master of other men unless he had learned his business 'top and bottom' in his youth. He himself had been foreman over 1,100 acres before he came of age. There seems to be a good deal of truth in these sayings, although they may admit of qualification. Certainly it appears to me that young men, especially those of the upper classes, do not turn their attention to the business of life sufficiently soon. At two or three and twenty it is not uncommon to find them with minds quite undetermined as to their careers. Very possibly this is, to a great extent, due to our long-drawn-out system of college training and its example, which in many instances, at any rate, only advantages those who are born to be rich, or to enter the Church, the Bar, and politics.

Most of Mr. Cranfield's land was what is called Woodland clay, which is, I suppose, although I am not quite clear upon the point, clay that was once covered with forest. Of this soil he said that there was no halfway house with it; you must either farm it properly, or leave it alone. Its great drawback is its tendency to crack, sometimes down to a depth of three feet. These cracks sever the roots of the crops and grasses and kill them, letting in both frost and drought. This was one of the reasons why here it was so difficult to lay down pastures; but Mr. Cranfield supposed that the good old meadows had got such a hold in the course of years that they were able to overcome the damage.

On this land it was necessary to be very early with the ploughings &c. so as to catch it when it was fit to work. Mr. Cranfield's swedes were Strawsonised to kill the fly, one gallon of paraffin being used per acre. Both the swedes and the kohlrabi received 4 cwt. of superphosphates per acre, while to the mangold of the Golden Tankard variety were given twelve or fourteen tons of farmyard manure. A portion of one huge field of 260 acres was devoted to the cultivation of Alsike clover-seed. The wheat here, which was of the Squaro-head variety, was light, and the beans were lousy owing to the severe drought. The oats were

Garton's Abundance. I observed that the field-gates were made very wide to admit of the passage of the steam cultivators which Mr. Cranfield used. The general aspect of this part of the county struck me as flat and rather drear, its wide expanse being broken only by the hedgerow pollards, which here were called 'doddles.'

In driving in the neighbourhood of the village of Grafham, we saw a good deal of land that had been laid down to grass. It was very poor, and fetched, Mr Cranfield said, 5s. to 10s. an acre rent. Also we passed a gravel farm belonging to the Duke of Manchester, which was much burnt up. I do not remember that Mr. Cranfield kept any gows, at least I saw none, but of sheep he had no fewer than 2,000 in summer. He was no believer in small-holdings, which he said, only succeed in the fen-lands. To ask people to take up such tenancies was, in his opinion, to ask them to go into slavery. Thus there was a smart man in that neighbourhood who had six acres. He just lived, but there was no one in creation who worked so hard. Lord Wantage had taken a farm from a tenant and cut it up into two-acre plots. Now the farmer was to have them back for two years for nothing. Cultivation of the land was the most depressed industry in England, and it was foolish to want to keep small people at so bad a business.

I can only say that these opinions, which are shared by many large farmers and others, do not seem to be borne out by the bulk of the evidence I have collected on the matter which may be read in these pages. If the lot of the small-holder is 'slavery,' at least it is a form of bondage into which he is very ready to enter, hard as he knows that the work will be. As Mr. Manning, of Toseland, had said to me a day or two before, even if from land that is not very kindly or suitable to his purpose, the little man does not on an average earn much more than an agricultural labourer 'he'd sooner be on his own.'

How rich in history is our English countryside! Next to the Priory where we were staying in the quaint little

town of Huntingdon, stood the house in which Oliver Cromwell was born ; and the brewery whereof our host, Mr. Herbert Jones, is one of the proprietors, was managed, and I think, owned, by Robert Cromwell, the father of the Protector. Not far off in Northamptonshire are the ruins of Fothering-gay Castle, where Mary Stuart met her fate, and in the Church of All Saints her body rested a while when James I moved it from Peterborough to Westminster Abbey. Here, too, lay Catherine of Arragon on her road to burial at Peterborough Cathedral, while at Kimbolton Castle, eleven miles distant, she passed the last years of her life.

At Kimbolton we were kindly received by Mr. Bryan Davies Cooke, who manages the property of the Duke of Manchester, some 16,000 acres of land. He said that the position was better than it had been, and the rents, including those of the feu-lands, were well paid. The uplands fetched from 10s. to 14s. only, but in Huntingdon they were not burdened with much tithe. Since the good time the rentals on this property had fallen about 30 per cent. Mr. Cooke thought that the season of 1901 was about the worst on record owing to the drought ; even the shocking year of 1893 was not so bad. Tenants were not plentiful, and unless it was in very good order, it was difficult to let a farm of 400 acres, which was the average size of those on the estate.

Small farms of 200 acres let more readily. Including the park-farm, and home land, they had 3,000 acres in hand, among which were three holdings they had taken over of late years. With labour Mr. Cooke said he had no trouble at all ; in fact they had never been better off than in 1901. Very often the tenants did not keep the men employed all the year round, those who did so had plenty of hands. In that neighbourhood the tendency was for the people to come back to the land, and the young men did not go away so fast as they used to do.

Their soil was clay with a blue clay and gault subsoil, but they had to depend upon surface water, which was difficult to come by. They reared and bought calves, selling out

the heifers as down calvers and the bullocks to fat at two or three years old. Their ewe flocks were Lincolns and Hampshires, and their usual shift was wheat, beans, wheat again, barley or oats, with seeds to follow, the white straw crops being dressed with superphosphates and crushed bones. Mr Cooke thought that the landlords, whose pockets must bear the pinch of the times, had suffered more than the tenants, who were apt, however, to expect too much out of their farms.

At Kimbolton I visited the Board school, where we saw the scholars at their lessons. Mr. Samuel Denton, the schoolmaster, said that his average attendance was seventy-three children and forty infants, the population of the place, which had fallen somewhat, being 918. Of those who had passed through his hands only about 20 per cent. of the boys remained upon the land, and the girls also went away. Still, his theory was that they would come back to the country, of which their common sense would show them the advantages, as it was more healthy and less expensive than the town. Taking the average he could not complain of the intelligence of the children. He said, however, that the lad who went out to do odd jobs on the land was not worth his salt when he returned to the school. He became machine-like and did not progress. His intelligence was blunted and he ceased to use his brain. He found that the lads about the land were stupid: they had to work hard and took no thought of the beauties of nature, whereas those who went to cycle factories were sharpened up and improved.

In this school a good deal of attention was given to agricultural teaching, through object lessons, experiments in elementary science, instruction on the germination of seeds, and in basket making &c. Mr. Denton said that the cottages in the neighbourhood were poor and scarce, as the old ones were not kept in repair and tumbled down. He told me also that there was a boot factory in the village which had been constructed to employ 120 hands, but I gathered that it had not been altogether successful.

After going over the church, a fine building which con-

tains some interesting monuments to various members of the Montagu family, we drove on to visit Mr. Fairy, of the Priory Farm. Mr. Fairy held 440 acres, of which half were old grass, a good deal more than the usual proportion. His soil was woodland clay with a chalky marl subsoil, and he said that it required a sprinkle of manure every year. He told me that the difference between woodland and ordinary clay was that the former is lighter and contains more vegetable matter; also it does not set like the common clay. He farmed on a four-course shift—fallow, barley, clover or beans, wheat—and sometimes took two white crops in succession. Saintfoin he found went off on his land, and he intended to grow lucerne in its place. On this soil he said that bush drains were ineffectual and that pipes were always used. Of labourers he had enough, all of them young fellows, but said that he 'would back the old men to do their work better than the young ones.' Mr. Fairy believed that nine farmers out of ten lost money in 1900, and that 1901 would be almost as bad a season as 1893. He had twenty-five head of cattle, for which he really did not know how to find grass, and at the neighbouring markets half-fatted bullocks were being sold for what they would fetch, owing to the scarcity of feed.

Leaving Mr. Fairy, Mr. Cooke drove us to see the steam-cultivator breaking up a great field that had been down to grass for fourteen years. This land was so hard that no horse-plough could touch it, and even now, going over it for the second time, the resistless steam-hauled cultivator laboured like a ship in a heavy sea, dragging up lumps of dry clay as large as a man's body. The pasturage which was being broken up was said to have been bad, and examining the clods I could see that the grass roots had not entered into them to any depth. The cost of this steam cultivation, the land being twice gone over, was said to be 10s. an acre and coal.

On this part of the estate the wheat, barley, and oats were well done and looked as promising as any crops I had

seen in England that season, the fens alone excepted, but the roots were thin and the spring beans a lost crop. One of Mr. Cooke's bailiffs, I think his name was Mr. White, said also that there had been practically no hay.

The aspect of these Huntingdonshire uplands has much in common with that of the Eastern Counties, but the pastures are fringed with elms growing in fences left thick and tall to shelter stock. For the most part, however, the hedges bordering arable fields seemed to be kept in fair order. Although the view is often extensive, in character intermediate between those which are common to Norfolk and Wiltshire, it could not be called interesting, at any rate in the season of 1901. Whether journeying by road or rail the traveller beheld a singularly unvaried scene: wide stretches of mellowing corn flanked with coverts, fences in the far distance dotted with elms, and a flat sameness of surface which was wearying to the eye. In all this neighbourhood hundreds of acres of land had gone down to grass, but for the most part the pasture thus formed seemed nearly worthless and gave a somewhat barren aspect to the countryside. Still, although I saw no really rich lands, these districts of Huntingdonshire are undoubtedly fertile, and in the years of drought had not suffered to the same extent as many lighter soils. Thus one field was pointed out to me which was said in a recent year to have grown no less than fifty-six bushels, or seven quarters of wheat to the acre—an enormous crop.

At Bluntisham, near St. Ives, in the valley of the Ouse, I visited Mr. Tebbutt, J.P., who managed a Bank and his large farm with equal success, as indeed he might be expected to do after an experience extending over a period of fifty years. Here at Bluntisham were many fruit gardens, and, as a consequence, a large number of small-holdings. Mr. Tebbutt was the pioneer of the industry in this district, and some of his orchards, planted thirty years ago, are very fine, especially one that contains a splendid grove of Bigarreau cherries, of which the fruit was remarkable for its size and flavour.

This orchard, which had gooseberries beneath the trees, cost £30 an acre to set, and was, I think, let at £5 the acre. Also there were apple trees, but these did not seem to do so well as the cherries. In 1901 I noticed that their produce was very small in size. Up to the present the fruit in this district has been remunerative, but Mr. Tebbutt said he saw signs that its culture was being overdone, although doubtless it is still a great mainstay to the small-holder.

The soil varies, Oxford clay to an unknown depth being the subsoil. Where the clay had been scooped out by water and no alluvial deposited it is poorest. Where alluvial has been deposited on the banks of the Ouse it is richest. Where gravel has been deposited in the place of the alluvial it is 'sharp' and liable to burn. Fruit is only grown on the best of these lands, but their extent is limited. Thus, out of a total of 3,000 acres in Bluntisham only some 10 per cent. were under fruit. The prevailing rents for fen and skirt lands were about 30s. an acre—they used to be 50s.—for agricultural uplands from 10s. to 25s. the acre, according to position and quality; and for good grass land about 45s. an acre.

Speaking generally, farm rentals had come down 40 per cent., and selling values in proportion. Mr. Tebbutt was, however, still a believer in the future of land, if bought with discretion at present prices, for he stated that whenever he had money he purchased land as an investment. Still he thought that the outlook was bad for landlords, but that although a great many farmers had gone under, and they were not prosperous, on the whole this class were struggling along, and had not given way to despair. In the last resort the refuge of the owner must be to let the land go down to grass. In his opinion nine-tenths of it could be treated thus with more or less success, and would make as good a rent as pasture as it did under the plough, with corn selling at 26s. the quarter. As an Englishman he would lament this for the sake of the country districts, which will then be depopulated, but speaking personally as a farmer he was

indifferent To cease growing wheat, he added, is bad ; but to cease growing countrymen is worse. In the past labour *had been a very great difficulty in Bluntisham and its neighbourhood*, but since the Peterborough brickworks had ceased to be so prosperous, more was available. Still the population declined, and the number of children in the schools was, Mr. Tebbutt said, only half what it had been.

Here I quote his words. 'What I feel to be the most serious thing is the fact that there is no young skilled labour.' He thought that the only way in which the exodus could be met was by a radical alteration in our education laws, and like other gentlemen in this county with whom I spoke, among whom I have already quoted Mr. Henry Cranfield, objected altogether to the system of compulsory learning. What he advocated was the adoption of the plan enforced in Switzerland and Australia, under which boys devote their winters to book work and their summers to the land. He pointed out that, in his experience, unless a boy begins to labour in the fields at about the age of ten, he will never labour there, since between ten and twelve he acquires a bias which is unchangeable, and will last him all his life. Mr. Tebbutt himself began on the farm at nine years of age, and by fourteen had a good insight into agriculture. His foreman also, Mr. Warren, whom he described as one of the most skilful in the county, began at nine. He added emphatically that unless a child begins to learn farm duties while he is still so small that 'he has to climb into the manger to put a collar on a horse, he won't stick to the land.'

Mr. Tebbutt seemed to be of opinion that there would be no great difficulty in convincing the community of the advantage of such a change in our educational programme. The belief, however, is one which I do not share. Leaving the merits of the question undiscussed, it must be remembered that these matters of education are in the main settled by the will of the cities. Although they may talk of it as desirable in the abstract, do the cities really wish that the

said: 'Selling straw and hay off the land is like selling coal out of it. In both cases it exhausts the capital value of the property.' It would be well in these days of the new agriculture if more farmers took this fact to heart. He also gave me a local version, which he said was ancient, of a well-known agricultural jest. Here it is:

Quoth his landlord to Thomas, 'Your rent I must raise,
I'm so plagnily pinched for the pelf'
Quoth Tom to his landlord, 'Your honour's main good,
For I never can raise it myself!'

Another large farmer of fen and other land in Huntingdonshire, who preferred to remain anonymous, said that at one time he held 2,000 acres, but was glad to say that he had reduced his area. The best fen-lands in that part of England lay, he declared, between March and Wisbech, a district where the farming was wonderfully good. He was of opinion that the fen-land paid to work. He began with 200 acres, and between 1868 and 1878 had ten good years, but he had made plenty of money since that time. He knew several men who had done well; thus one bought a farm for £12,000 made out of potatoes, another was worth £10,000, and so on. But to be successful a man must have good land at £1 an acre rent, plenty of money, and a sound headpiece. On the poor, strong lands he thought that farming would come to an end, prices were so low and the labour was so costly and troublesome. Still fen-lands took more labour than the high-lands. When he had ploughed there he had not done, he must roll, and harrow, and roll again. The willow weed, for the most part, grew upon badly drained land. The all-round rent was 33s. an acre, putting the arable at 26s., with 2s. 6d. internal drainage rate, and the grass at £2. That of 1901 was the summer which suited the fens. They wanted a dry cold May, for if the May was wet weeds grew like cucumbers, and the barley went down afterwards. Of wheat they could harvest five quarters or more per acre, and of barley six or seven quarters.

His potatoes, of which he had thirty or forty acres, were

Up-to-Dates. They were a speculative crop, but many who had grown them in the Fens had made fortunes. Mangold and kohlrabi did well; that season his were the best he had seen for years. During the winter he had sold 600 fat sheep which up to March fetched good money, but after that were low. He believed that the fen farmers, whose hope was sunshine, were as prosperous and did as well as ever, as there was plenty of stuff such as hay and straw which they were allowed to sell now that could not be sold in the old days. The manurial value that was thus lost to the land they replaced by artificials. Wet seasons, however, were their ruin: it was rain that broke them. A report from my informant, were it obtainable, upon the condition of this district after the wet summer and—in the Fens at any rate—difficult and disastrous harvest of 1902, would, I imagine, give much point to this remark.

He had one son who held a strong upland farm which he worked on the four-course system at a rent of 10s. the acre; he was doing fairly well; but another son on a sharp-land farm had done badly for the last year or so. Upland farming did not enable a man to make money. If he really wanted to lose money, however, he should go into a grazing farm. He had given up one that he held at a rent of about 18s. an acre, good land and nearly all grass, because it did not pay. The dry seasons killed him, and when the flies were about in that country, the cattle would not do. He held that corn, sheep, and horses, if you were lucky with them, paid better than anything else; indeed for his part he would sooner grow wheat at £1 a quarter—it paid at 30s.—than beef at 6s. a stone.

He had never been short of labour in his life. Some farmers would not pay their men enough, and some 'messed them about'. Still nearly all the young men went away, leaving the old ones behind. Their wages were 15s., 14s., and a few at 13s.; foremen £1, horsemen 16s., with a house, a rood of potato ground, and a ton of coal. On his fen farm he had two good cottages, and three that were tumble-down in

which he could not persuade men to live. Cottages in his opinion were the crux of the labour question. With good houses, good water, and pigsties, plenty of men could still be hired. The question for the future was, Could farmers afford the wages which were demanded, as the land really was unable to pay more?

This gentleman quoted the following instance of the difference in return between a wet and a dry year in the Fens. In a wet season a ten-acre field of barley fell down and went rotten, all that was harvested from it being thirty-eight coombs of damaged grain. With this grain nineteen and a half acres were sown in the following dry year, which yielded 156 quarters of barley that fetched 32s. a quarter. His sons had some of the same seed, which was of the Goldthorpe strain, and from it both of them raised good crops, showing that its quality and productiveness had not been impaired by the damp.

Mr. Arthur George Dilley, of the firm of Dilley, Son & Read, auctioneers and land agents, Huntingdon, said he did not think that the agricultural position was satisfactory. Huntingdonshire was a wheat-growing county, and the question was largely one of the price of wheat. Fen and high land, however, were very different things and could not be spoken of together. The fen farmers were generally prosperous, and in some cases had bought their land. In addition to corn they grew potatoes, carrots, and mangolds, and for the most part did well with them. Still potatoes were speculative; one season they might be scarcely worth carting, and another bring in a great deal of money.

In the Fens there was competition for farms at rentals varying from 25s. to 35s., and in Whittlesea Mere from £2 to £3. These lands were easy to work, as on them three horses could drag a double plough. The drainage rates came to 6s. or 7s. the acre, and were mostly paid by the tenant. During the last twenty years the letting customs had varied, agreements being now a matter of negotiation; but a man was not allowed to take more than two white

straw crops running. On the uplands, there was more inquiry for farms at 'times-prices' than there had been ten or twelve years before, and at the reduced rates some tenants were doing fairly well. The average man paid his way and found a little horse-breeding helpful. Capital in many cases was short; it should be £10 an acre, but he did not always dare to ask a tenant what he had, as the thing was to let the land. Mr. Dilley knew of no farms that were lying actually dormant. He furnished me with some specimen comparative rentals of average Huntingdonshire estates. They are as follows:

No. 1 . .	1875 to 1879 . .	From 28s. to 40s. per acre.
" . .	1901	" 1l. " 23s. "
No. 2 . .	1875 to 1879 . .	" 25s. " 30s. "
" . .	1901	" 14s. " 15s. 6d. "
No. 3 . .	1875 to 1879 . .	" 1l. " 28s. 6d. "
" . .	1901	" 10s. " 12s. "

It will be observed that the drop on these properties, most if not all of which are, I believe, on the uplands, is very considerable.

The landlords, Mr. Dilley said, had been hard hit: the death duties had come into force, the income tax was more, the jointures and encumbrances for the most part were the same, and the repairs were heavier, as in the good times tenants did a great deal for themselves which they refused to do now. Still none of the local owners had actually gone to the wall, although it must be remembered that some of them had means besides their land.

In the 1875 period the tendency was towards large farms which paid in those days, but now there was more demand for small tenancies. Mr. Dilley did not see how it could pay the landlord to cut up his property into little holdings and supply the buildings. Such holdings could not, in fact, be created by the owners on account of their cost. So far as he knew the supply of labour was bad, and there were many complaints from the north of the county. Few young men became farm hands, and in one village with

which he was acquainted, nine or ten of the youths rode daily four miles on their bicycles to take tram for the brickfields.

He thought that in the future this labour question would become very serious. The 1901 census showed a decrease in the population of their rural districts. Thus in the St. Ives Union the total decrease was 1,180, the increase being confined to two parishes only. In the St. Neots Union, which includes the Kimbolton district, the total decrease for the decade was 1,326. From the Fens, however, he heard no complaints about labour, for there the women and children worked and earned money. In the high-lands the usual wages were from 14s. to 15s., which was as much as tenants could pay at the existing prices of produce. Cottages were let at from 1s. to 2s. a week, and generally, but not universally, were sufficient in number. In some places they stood unoccupied. Nearly all new cottages were, Mr. Dilley said, built with three bedrooms.

In conclusion I may say that Huntingdonshire, being largely a corn county, has suffered like all others where cereals are grown. In one respect, however, it has a distinct advantage. As the reader will gather from the foregoing pages, in the important matter of labour Huntingdonshire is on the whole far better off than the majority of English counties. Some of this comparative abundance, however, might have been due to the depression in the brick trade at Peterborough and elsewhere which prevailed in the year 1901.

OXFORDSHIRE

THE inland county of Oxfordshire, whither I travelled from Huntingdon, lies for the most part in the basin of the Thames and comprises an area of about 483,000 acres. In shape it is irregular, its width varying from seven to twenty-eight miles, while its greatest length is fifty-one miles. The climate is rather cold for its situation, especially in the exposed hilly districts of the north-west. The Chiltern Hills, where the land is poor and chalky, run from the south-east to the north-east. Oxfordshire, which is a county of hills and vales, contains a considerable variety of soils, among them the rich, black alluvial of the river valleys, which are, I suppose, as fine pastures as any in England; the red earth of the north, the limestone sand and loam of the midlands, the Oxford clay or clunch between the Bampton and the Thames, the Kimmeidge clay between Sandford and Waterperry, the *has*, the upper and middle *has*, and others. All the usual English crops are grown in the county, and on the low-lying meadows many cattle are fed, while sheep, mostly of the Oxford Down breed, graze upon the hills. Many parts of Oxfordshire are exceedingly picturesque and even beautiful.

Our first host in this county was Mr. Henry C. Maul, of Horley House, Horley, a very pretty parish with a red loam soil on oolite, situated about four miles north-west of Banbury, near to the borders of Warwickshire. The cottages are all built of red stone, but here the sad tale of the desertion of the land is writ large, since many of them are unoccupied and falling into ruins. The Church of St Ethelreda, an ancient and beautiful building, is also in bad order. On the

wall of the north aisle is a very curious fresco of St. Christopher struggling across a stream by the help of a breaking staff, with Christ seated on his shoulder. Issuing from his mouth is this screed :

What art Thou and art so yynge ?
Bar I never so hevy a thyng.

To which Christ replies :

Yey, I be hevy, no wunther is,
For I am the Kynge of Blys.

Mr. William Bagnall, of the Manor House, Horley, farmed 306 acres of land, a good-sized holding for this part of Oxfordshire, where I was told that many of the tenancies average 100 acres, as was the case with three of them quite close to the Manor House. The rent of this farm, which was half pasture and half arable, used to be £650, or more than £2 an acre. In 1901 it was £340, or about 23s. the acre. So far as I could gather this drop of a little less than 50 per cent. represented the average decrease in rental values in the district, where, however, good pasture will still fetch 30s. the acre.

Mr. Bagnall said that he had plenty of labour, for which they were better off in Horley than in most places ; but he was the only farmer who employed many hands. The little men kept practically none, doing all the work themselves with their families, which accounted for the demand being small. He told me that in many of the villages in his neighbourhood, the cottages were falling into decay, which, as I have mentioned, was the case at Horley itself, as those who used to inhabit them had flocked to the towns. Also the ironstone which gives the soil its ruddy colour, was worked in the district and drew off a certain number of hands. His labour-bill came to about £1 an acre, and the wages were 14s. for stockmen and 11s. to 12s. for day men, with £1 extra at haymaking and £2 extra at harvest. On piecework the men could earn 3s. a day, and their cottages cost them from 1s. to 1s. 6d. a week to rent.

Mr Bagnall thought that the farmers in that part of Oxfordshire were just about able to hold their own and no more, there was no chance of their saving money.

His tillage course was: (1) roots; (2) barley; (3) barley or oats with manure; (4) seeds; (5) wheat, the seeds being only kept down for one year. It was not first-class barley land, four quarters an acre being a good return. Four quarters was also an average crop of wheat, although he had grown five quarters, and oats yielded well but could not stand a dry May. Sainfoin, he said, would not grow about there. One hundred and thirty acres of his farm were devoted to store and dairying stock, of which he had fifty. His sheep were Oxford Downs, and his eighty breeding ewes had produced over a hundred lambs, his experience being that sheep paid better than anything.

Mr. Bagnall told me that there were some local smallholders, thus, amongst others, a man in the village held from ten to fourteen acres, and went out to work in his spare time. He was doing very well. On the higher lands, however, where the light and brashy soil fetched from 7s. to 10s. rent, the small men could not get on, although the large farmers did pretty well. At Burford, on the borders of Gloucestershire, where the soil was a stone-brash with a gravel and rock subsoil, roots were grown, but in these dry seasons they came to nothing. What was wanted there was a dripping time. In that district they cultivated sainfoin largely. At Heyford and Somerton, on the Cherwell, where there was much pasture, they were all dairymen and sent their milk to London, the railroad being nicknamed the Milky Way. In that district, Mr. Bagnall said, the old yeoman class had gone under and been replaced by a harder-working set of people. Perhaps the richest meadows were along the Isis, and 'the nearer to Banbury the better the land.'

The leading physical characteristics of Mr. Bagnall's farm and of those surrounding it, were the succession of swelling hills separated by vales, or rather level hollows, in which

lay the dairy meadows and streamlets ran. One valley especially was deep and wide, having evidently in some remote age been cut out by the action of water, for the sharp turns where the eddies worked can still be seen. On the slopes of some large grass fields facing south and south-west, we saw the curious artificial formation known as Horley Vineyard, or Steps Meadow. This consists of many well-defined and broad terraces cut by the spade out of the surface of the hillside. Tradition says that on these terraces, now covered with pasture, grapes were grown, but at what period of the county's history no one seems to know. That grapes were cultivated in England, presumably for wine making, there can be no doubt, for, as I have shown in my work 'A Farmer's Year' (page 20 *et seq.*), at my own village of Ditchingham a vineyard existed in the thirteenth century, and, to judge from the old engraving which I have therein reproduced, vines were still grown on the spot so late as 1750.

All this land, which is good for laying down to grass, had stood the drought well, the rolling meadows being still bright green in hue beneath the burning sun of July, and furnishing an ample bite. In one of the clover leys over which we walked I observed 'dodder' (*Cuscuta trifoliæ*) at its deadly work. The patches were about nine feet wide and the yellowish brown mass of the parasite was still growing outwards, leaving in the centre of the circle, bare ground where once there had been clover. As the reader probably knows, this parasite destroys by flinging its living threads about the stems of the clover or other plants, and drawing the life out of them through tiny suckers with which it pierces their bark. Dodder generally appears in fields of red clover of which the seed has not been properly dressed by the merchant.

Mr. Percy Berridge, of Upton, whose farm of, I think, about three hundred acres, which his father held for thirty years before him, lay upon the borders of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, said that in his opinion unless the farmer had outside 'help,' farming did not pay. With good fortune,

rent and a living might be made, but no one could expect a return of more than four per cent. on his capital. The average rents of that district ran from £1 to £1 5s., that of his farm, which was half pasture, being over £1. Although he could not say that farmers were doing well, undoubtedly there was competition for farms, which was so astonishing that Mr. Berridge presumed it must be accounted for by the constant moving of tenants, generally into smaller holdings. The large farms were often taken by Devon and Scotch men.

These people, especially the Scotch, worked very hard and employed but few hands. They liked to take 400 or 500 acres, mostly of pasture, and to do the shepherding themselves; but, he said, they did not keep the land well and spent no money at all. I think it was in Leicestershire that a gentleman defined the immigrant Scotch farmer to me as 'a sandy-haired fellow with a foreign accent, who came from the north with a sheep dog and a roll of barbed wire, and took half the parish!' Certainly the characteristics of the Scotch farmers in England, as described by Mr. Berridge, of course, with exceptions, were very remarkable. Also they seem everywhere to be more or less the same. Thus I heard of one of them not long ago who took a large farm in Suffolk.

When the outgoing man's auction was over the farm hands, most of whom had worked on the place all their lives, advanced to ask employment of the new tenant. In reply to the Scotch gentleman's question as to what he could do the first said that he was a horseman. 'Oh!' was the answer, 'then I shan't want *you*, as my eldest son will look after the horses' No. 1 having retired crestfallen, No. 2 tried his luck, and in reply to the same query said that he was a cowman. His fate was soon decided. 'Then I shan't want *you*, as my second son will look after the cows and my daughters will make up the butter.' Next came the shepherd and his mate. 'I shan't want *you*,' said the working farmer from the north, 'as I do all the shepherding myself.' And so it went on, in the end few of the old hands finding re-employment. I believe that the gentleman in

question is still in occupation of his large but understaffed farm, where he and his family work from dawn to dusk and make a living, but no more. But what became of the poor labourers? Perhaps they know in Whitechapel—for two of the causes of rural depopulation are the shrinkage of the demand for labour in these bad times, and the perpetual laying away of arable land to grass. This story is authentic.

Mr. Berridge's farm, which was good light soil over ironstone, but rather shallow in places, lies very near to Edgehill, where there is a sharp fall of several hundred feet to the great plain beneath. Below the hill the soil is very different, being, I believe, stiff with a clay subsoil. The up-hill land like Mr. Berridge's will grow good roots, oats, and wheat, but the barley is of a poor quality and high-coloured. Mr. Berridge said that there was plenty of labour in that neighbourhood as they were a long way off a town. Still the exodus was going on, although some liked to return after they had been away a while, and most of the men were old. Also many of the farmers made the mistake of 'cutting' their labour, which of course increased the supply available. The men, however, gave a great deal of trouble. Thus he had recently been obliged to dismiss two shepherds who took a fancy that they would not work alongside another man when told to do so. On the Oxfordshire part of this farm I saw two cottages with, I think, some buildings, that were untenanted and falling into ruins.

Mr. Berridge informed me that there were some smallholders in the neighbourhood who, in addition to working their little tenancies, kept horses and carted stone for the road authorities and others. They did fairly well. The wages were 11s. a week, with extra money at haysal and harvest, and a good deal of piecework, horsemen receiving 15s. and a cottage. In the Leamington district, where the labour question was much more acute, they received 13s. a week. There were no cottages on the farm, and Mr. Berridge said that the people would not live away from the villages. The main arable crops were wheat, oats, and roots. The pasture

was useful, but being close to the rock, dried rather quickly, and was not good enough to fat out beasts, and the soil could be ploughed even in wet weather, as it never clung, and worked well. A breeding flock of Oxford Down sheep was kept; also cows, of which the calves were reared, milk being fed to them, and sold as stores. Vetches were fed off and the mustard was ploughed in. The winter oats had been a failure, but the white oats, which had been sown again in the last week of March, looked fairly well. I noticed that the swedes were coming up irregularly owing to the drought. Mr. Berridge told me that he took a very gloomy view of agricultural prospects in that district, and that if he could see his way to any other employment he would be glad to get out of farming.

He kindly conducted us to Mr. Broad's farm in Tysoe parish, on the extreme verge of Edgehill. Hence the view was truly magnificent. Three or four hundred feet below, from the base of a steep wooded bank, stretched a gigantic plain comprising tens of thousands of acres of land, so gigantic, indeed, that on the night of the Diamond Jubilee two hundred bonfires could be counted from this spot. In front lay all Warwickshire, to the south-west Worcestershire, more due west the Wrekin in Shropshire. Immediately below was the spire of Radway Church, and beyond it Kineton Oaks Wood, situated about half a mile from Kineton Holt. Between the two stood Battle Farm, the scene of the fray of Edgehill in the time of Charles I. Very impressive was the outlook, especially to the west, where the rays of the setting sun shot downwards in countless arrows from behind a black, fire-rimmed cloud. In the far, far distance the horizon melted into the pink evening sky. In the middle distance were clumps of sombre woodland, and to the north-east, crested by a windmill, the swelling hills, while nearer—their expanse broken only by the village of Kineton and a few homesteads—numberless irregularly-shaped and fenced meadows dotted with hedgerow timber, and here and there with herds of cattle, lay beneath us like a map bounded by the mighty wall of Edgehill.

At Hanwell, a parish within three miles of Banbury, where the soil is principally light loam, I went over the farm of Mr. Charles French, of Hanwell Castle (once the residence of Sir Anthony Cope, Vice-Chancellor to Queen Elizabeth), a dilapidated but still beautiful building with a fine brick tower, out of the material of which most of the barns in the parish are said to have been built. Mr. French, who farmed 310 acres of which half were grass, said that farmers in his neighbourhood paid their way and made a living. Rents had dropped something over 10s. an acre. Thus in Hanwell, which was close to Banbury and had a good road, they used to be £2 4s. 6d., and now averaged 30s. If a farm were for hire, there would be competition for it in Hanwell. He told me that labour was plentiful, and although a good many young men went away he thought they would come back. Three boys who left him returned and persuaded their brothers to stay at home. In that village there were more cottages than they wanted, although these were bad. He had asked one of his men if he would care to move into a good, new cottage at a rent of 1s. 9d. a week, but he preferred to remain in his dilapidated dwelling, where he paid a shilling.

As we walked over his farm and across the old park pastures, which are good in a dripping time, but almost worthless in a dry season, Mr. French pointed out to me how the soil varied, the clinging banks on the ironstone leading down to the clay meadow lands, being sticky and much heavier than the light high-lying lands. The pastures in the hollows below looked very good, and that the land has substance in it, was shown by the fact that we saw lucerne which had been down seven years and remained thick enough to leave for another season. Also there was a field of fine mangolds, a crop that had been grown on this same piece of ground for six years in succession, receiving every year twenty loads of muck per acre. The barleys, too, were fairly good, and estimated to yield five and a half quarters on the clinging lands and five quarters up above; but on a field that was nearer the rock there would not be more than three and a

half quarters. This, however, was a breeding rather than an arable farm, the system being to sell out cattle as stores, and as many Oxford Down sheep as could possibly be fattened. Mr. French said that he did not see any prospect of more prosperous times.

Mr. Holtom, of Hardwick House, which he described as 'a lone place, with no cottages to speak of,' whom I saw at Mr. French's, farmed 1,500 or 1,600 acres in a radius of ten miles, and, I was told, dealt largely in cattle. He said that within this ten-mile radius the average rent for good land was 24s. an acre, while some round Chipping Norton was not worth 4s. an acre. He was very short of labour, and did not believe if once the young fellows had been away that they would return to the land. He said that the best farmers had lost the most money; it was the high-priced farms, which required to be well stocked and took a great deal of capital, that were suffering most. He knew scores of good men that had done their best, who had been well off ten years before, and now were badly off. Things, however, were worse in Leicester and Northamptonshire than they were in Oxford, though even in that county many were taking smaller farms. In the Midlands, with which I think Mr. Holtom had business relations, the graziers were, he declared, losing money. In Oxfordshire and the neighbouring counties much land had gone down to grass owing to the labour trouble. He believed that all that farmers could do was to go on steadily and exercise the greatest economy, treating the land in the best possible fashion. But, he added, knowing all that he did, if he had a son nothing would induce him to put him into farming.

The Church of St. Peter's at Hanwell is a very fine building in the Decorated and Early English styles. Here is a beautiful monument to Sir Anthony Cope, who died in 1614, and his wife, and over a window are hung three perfect helmets, one of them surmounted by a fleur-de-lys and another by feathers, which, with two gauntlets, were

found in a box in the tower. Probably they belonged to one of the Copes, and may have been removed when the Round-heads stabled their horses here. The font is Norman, and the capitals of the pillars are supported by figures grotesquely carved. Altogether I thought this church, which stands close to the brick tower of the castle that Cromwell is said to have destroyed, exceedingly interesting.

Mr. Davis, of Wroxton, agent for the estates of Lord North, took a very hopeful view of the condition of agriculture in Oxford and the neighbouring counties. The Banbury district he considered the garden of England in wet seasons. The farmers, he said, were prosperous if they attended to their business, with the exception of such little men as were over-rented, and of those who held more land than their capital justified. Nearly all Lord North's tenants were substantial men, and during the six years that Mr. Davis had managed the estate, he had only occasionally been obliged to give rebates. At the last audit not a penny was asked for. Some of their land commanded a high rent—from 40s. to 52s. the acre. I think this was in a part of Northamptonshire, where I understood Mr. Davis to say that 25s. to 22s. was a low rental for the poorer land. Some farms in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire were let at 27s. the acre, only one farm on the whole property bringing in less than £1. This holding was seven miles from a station. I gathered, however, that on an average the rents had fallen 30 per cent. since the good times. Most of the farmers, he stated, dealt in cattle more or less; indeed, he thought that was the right way to farm in this district. The only thing they could complain of was the drought, which had made the hay crop very short. The labour was a difficult question on this highly rented land, as the ironstone works took the 12s. labourers from the villages and paid them 18s.

At Balscote, which is a chapelry of Wroxton, there was a scarcity of young men, a great many of whom went to Birmingham and became train conductors, cab drivers, &c. They were not coming back very fast, but Mr. Davis believed

that they would in the future, as the towns did not want any more labour. They could still command a certain number of female hands for weeding, singling, and haymaking, at from 10*d.* to 18*d.* a day, but he thought Wroxton was one of the last villages where these were available. The wages were 14*s.* for horsemen without house; 12*s.* for ploughmen, 15*s.* for cowmen, including Sunday work, with a house, and 12*s.* for shepherds, including Sunday work. The farmers were very economical livers, few of them spending more than 30*s.* a week, and the small men did most of the work themselves. It was their carefulness and the good land they farmed that enabled them to get on. In the Kineton district of Warwickshire all the crops were looking remarkably well, and no rain was wanted before harvest. The rents Below-hill—that is, on the flat land which we saw from Edgehill—averaged, Mr Davis said, from 15*s.* to £1 an acre.

In Wroxton I saw another fine church, that of All Saints, which dates from the fourteenth century. Amongst other monuments is one of singular beauty, in alabaster, to Sir William Pope, Bart., first Earl of Downe, who died in 1631, and Lady Anne, his wife. The Earl is represented by a coroneted figure clad in armour, mantle, and ruff, and his wife draped in a robe, with ruff and veil. At their heads two sons kneel in robes of scarlet and lace ruffs, and at their feet one daughter. Their heads rest on cushions and their feet on dogs. The font is Decorated, octagonal, and adorned with curious sandstone figures of the Apostles. I was informed that until 1892 many banners were to be seen in the chancel, together with coronets, helmets, and other armour, deposited there, no doubt, on the occasions of the burials of various members of the Pope and North families. These are said to be now in Wroxton Abbey, the seat of Lord North. I mention the circumstance because I never knew before that it was customary to remove from a church historical adornments that must have rested there for generations, and thus become, as it were, attached to the fabric. I suppose, however, that the actual ownership of such articles

has been held to vest in the descendants of the persons to whom they once belonged

At Banbury, remarkable for its quaintness and ancient, timbered houses, I saw Mr Booth, the well-known auctioneer and estate agent of the firm of Castle, Son, & Booth in that town. He said that 1901 was one of the worst years they had ever known, the corns being dreadful—indeed they had done badly for the previous five years. The average rents of the district he put at 39s. the acre for feeding land that would fat bullocks out—one bullock and some sheep to the acre—which was in good demand, and 15s. for arable. Such 15s. land used to fetch 28s. the acre, but being arable had felt the full weight of the depression in a county that was largely devoted to sheep. Land in that neighbourhood which used to fetch £40 the acre was in 1901 worth about £25; indeed he quoted some within a short distance of Banbury, which thirty years before had been purchased for £100 the acre, that would not in 1901, he said, fetch £25. Buyers of land now required $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on their money. However, Mr. Booth thought that they had seen the worst, and that there was a fair amount of capital in the district.

Labour, he declared, was very expensive, men being most difficult to get, the ironstone works with which he was connected absorbing many of those who were available. Also some large agricultural-machine makers in the neighbourhood drained the supply, although he did not think that they employed a third of the hands they used to do. It was on account of this scarcity of labour that they were obliged to lower rentals, as tenants left unless they got reductions, and if the matter was not mended, it must mean that all landlords would have to reduce still further. He thought that the question was going to become very serious, as nearly all the young fellows went away. On most farms, he said, but few would be found who were not middle-aged; thus on one he had seven, not a man of them under forty. *

The general position was that a farmer whose holding

was worth the rent he paid for it, could get along, but the man who gave 39s. the acre could not make the money. There were a number of Devonshire men in the county who kept up the rents, and small accommodation farms would always command a good price. The Oxfordshire landlords were, Mr. Booth told me, hard hit, and those of them who were dependent upon rents could not keep up their position. Unless prices improved he considered the prospect bad. To sell the best fat sheep at $7\frac{1}{2}d$ a pound and fat cattle at sixpence a pound, as he had done recently with hundreds, was to give them away. The Banbury district Mr. Booth called one of barley, corn, and sheep, whereas that of Thame, near the borders of Buckinghamshire was given up to bullock feeding and milk-walks.

At Great Rollright, three miles from Chipping Norton, our host was Mr. A. C. Hall, of the Manor. Mr. A. C. Hall is the son of Mr. William H. Hall, of Cambridgeshire, whose views and estate I have spoken of in my chapter on that county, and the land which he farms in Oxfordshire is the property of his father. In all he had about 700 acres in hand, 420 of which he had been managing for over two years, the remaining 280 having been taken up by him at the previous Michaelmas. This new land was not yet fully stocked, but when that had been done, the capital employed upon the 700 acres would amount to about £10 the acre.

The results of Mr. A. C. Hall's working of the Manor Farm of 420 acres for the two years were, that at the end of the first season he had £408 net cash in hand, out of which he could, if necessary, have paid the rent of £300, or nearly 15s. the acre. This, however, by arrangement with his father, he did not do, the amount of the rent having been transferred to the capital account of the farm. The second year showed the rent earned and, I think, a small profit in addition. With the holding he took over a milk-walk, I believe in Chipping Norton, which had been of considerable financial assistance to him in its working.

Mr. Hall, who had received a thorough agricultural edu-

cation with land agents and otherwise, said that he found the labour question the most difficult of all to face. He could get boys, but the young men were going, as they preferred the higher wages and excitements of a town, and when the old fellows died, unless the present generation of lads took to the land, the supply must cease. There were still enough day labourers of all ages, but of skilled men there was an increasing scarcity. This must be met, he thought, by the use of mechanical contrivances, such as hay-turners, corrugated iron roofing for stacks, &c.; an expedient, it was true, that would not meet the national problem of the depopulation of the land. Of this, indeed, he could see no solution at present.

In his farming Mr. Hall relied chiefly on the sale of store cattle and milk, both of which were remunerative at the prices then prevailing. He also sold corn to buy other feeding stuffs, but intended to part with less in future. He was of opinion that at the reduced rent and the prices then attainable, the farmer who had some capital and was a good man at his business, ought to make a decent interest out of his money on which he could live. To do this, however, he must work the land with intelligence and buy his manure, seeds, &c. in the best markets. Certainly they were more prosperous in Oxford than in Cambridgeshire, and in the former county the soil would grow good grass, which was not the case in the latter. Doubtless there was going to be a difficult time, but on the whole he was cheerful as regarded the future. He held that the selection of stock was a very important matter, and the common practice of breeding from second-rate sires, a folly. Consuming corn on the premises would also help, as to sell this at a low, and buy cake at a high price must be wrong. Further he did not believe that farmers kept sufficiently full and detailed accounts. He should not call his land really good, as parts of it had been much neglected and some of the pasture was poor.

Walking over Mr. Hall's farm we passed through short barley growing on brashy soil, and over some gorsey, upland grass, where mares and foals were running, into a mixed field

of swedes and Thousand-headed kail. In this four rows of swedes were drilled alternately with two of the Thousand-heads, so that if the swedes should perish the kail might stand and give a crop. Here too we saw two fields of barley, one of which had been sown on a sheep-trodden and bad seed bed, and the other not. Of these the first, which had come up then, was standing well after the rain, whereas the better treated, thick crop was laid.

Most of this land was steam-cultivated at a cost of 12s 'the double go,' the cultivator in some places having reached down to the limestone rock and torn it, which was said to benefit the crop rather than otherwise. On these brashy uplands three horses could drag a double-furrow plough, but the lower land took three horses to a single plough. Hence we had a view of the Cotswolds to the north-west draped in a dim haze and looming over a valley studded with many trees which looked black under a leaden sky. On either hand were high, steep lands which to the right culminated in that spur or continuation of Edgehill, that is known as Brailes. In the park-like vale, also, of which the heavy land was dotted with fine trees, lay the distant villages of Moreton and Long Compton.

Passing down a steep-lying clover ley we reached rich, alluvial grass land in the bottom. This was some of the best in the country side, and in places was rendered almost marshy by springs that bubbled out upon its slopes. Notwithstanding their low-lying position, as the ridged uplands show, this and other meadows that lay beyond it, were once under the plough, though that they have been pasture for some centuries is proved by the fact that trees, which cannot be less than 200 years of age, are growing on the crests of the ridges. This remark applies to great quantities of fields in the locality, though, taking the drainage difficulty into consideration, what could have induced our forefathers to cultivate corn in a position and on soil so eminently suited to the growth of grass, I cannot imagine.

Walking through these fertile meadows and past a wood

inhabited by more rabbits than a farmer likes to see, our path led us up the slope again over another meadow, still of good quality, though not so rich as those we had left, till we came to an old farmhouse, stone-built and roofed with tiles also of split stone, that was set snugly upon a shoulder of land, its orchard of apple trees growing downwards to the brook which drained the pastures. This old standing, so charming to the eye, was inhabited by the man who tended the horses and the cattle that grazed upon the meadows, of which the lowest would fetch a rent of about 27s. the acre, as compared with £1 1s. an acre for those immediately above. Still mounting over grass that grew steadily poorer, we reached the main farm buildings, set upon a ridge, together with yards, Dutch barns for hay, and cottages. Beyond these on a clover ley ran Mr. Hall's splendid flock of 190 Oxford Down ewes, all well grown and thriving, with not a case of foot rot in their company, and so back to the Manor.

About this parish of Great Rollright the views are lovely. It is a wide land of wooded hill and vale; to the west is seen the bold line of the Cotswolds, and to the south-west, looking down to Chipping Norton, the vast expanse of Gloucestershire. To the south lies a wood-crowned hill, while westward again, the soft edge of the clouded sky met the crest of the swelling ridges of which the expanse seemed to be broken only by a single stack. On a Sunday evening at the end of July, I walked to a place called Barn Ground Field, that overlooked the vale of Moreton-in-the-Marsh and Long Compton, with Brailes Hill to the north-west and to the north the dense mass of Wychwood Forest. Thence, and from another place where I stopped a while, the prospect on that peaceful eve was singularly charming. Over the distances the fleecy mists were rising after the storm, half hiding the rich-leaved trees that looked grey beneath the soft, grey clouds. The western and northern sky was clearer and of a faint blue tinge such as appears after it has been washed with rain.

In front of me stretched the wide, crop-laden plain,

marked here and there with hedgerow trees, one of them stark and leafless, in the midst of all this full, abounding life, a hint of death and winter. Below, rising from a sheltered dip, appeared the pinnacled tower of the church whence floated the sound of a bell tolling slowly—another hint of death. Near at hand was a field of ripening oats, their tassels bending in the faint evening breeze, while the road-side turf on which I stood was bright starred with scabious and with harebells. From their sleeping place in some unseen vale below, came the clamour of homing rooks; the martins wheeled close over the lush green of the meadows where the lambs grazed ceaselessly, while over all lay the solemn hush of the brooding, summer twilight. Presently, as the day died down, all this vast scene grew pale and desolate; the rooks ceased their cawing, the doves dipped no more towards their nests among the willows, the bell was silent, and the only sound which greeted the ear was that of the bleating of a sheep far away amid the meadows. Last of all there appeared a faint, golden glow upon the spurs of the murky Cotswolds. This passed, and it was night.

The buildings at the Manor Farm were singularly good and commodious, I think the best indeed that I had seen in Oxfordshire. No less than £2,000 had just been spent upon them; for it must be remembered that in carrying on his farming enterprises, Mr. Hall has an advantage which so many lack—that of an ample supply of capital.

I was especially glad to meet Mr. J. W. Hughes, of Great Rollright, inasmuch as he is a member of the vanishing yeoman class, 200 out of the 600 acres he farmed being his own property. He said that in this neighbourhood rents had fallen from 30 to 40 per cent—in the case of his own farm a half, and of another in the parish, belonging, I believe, to Brasenose College, not quite so much. Selling values had sunk in proportion, but both to sell and to let, grass kept up its price better than other land. There was a ready demand for farms, but tenants could only just get along when they lived economically. Also there were many

wandering farmers who stayed a year or two in a holding and then moved away. If a good old tenant died, his farm was snapped up at once, as it was sure to be clean and in heart. Many of the new people, however, were very short of capital; in that district there was a glaring case in which a man had not even been able to crop all his take. On the whole Mr Hughes thought that the land was better farmed than it used to be some years back, but money had often been lost over it. Thus he mentioned a rich man who had taken a portion of a poor land, Oxfordshire estate in hand, and after a while was heard to declare that he could stand losing £1,000 a year over farming, but to lose from £5,000 to £10,000 was more than he had bargained for.

The lack of labour was a serious question, and indeed their great rock ahead. The young men would not take to the land, and if they did they refused to learn to plough, or to come on Sundays. Although there was no actual bad feeling between them and their employers, the labourers were no longer obliging; thus they would not help in the mornings or after their hours were finished. His own men, however, had been with him for many years. There was nothing like so much labour employed as used to be the case, nor, as a rule, were extra men required at harvest, which he got in with his ordinary staff. The wages of daymen were 12s a week, but the extras brought them up to over 15s, and on his farm the men had their cottages free. In some cases shepherds took 18s. or 19s., and in others 16s. or 17s. In 1900 they had raised wages 1s. a week, but at present prices of produce, no further increase could be afforded.

Mr. Hughes said that the soil in the parish differed, and included sand, limestone, and a certain amount of marl. Some of it, however, was very good. Of grass he had 150 acres, but told me that the land did not generally lay down well; a fact that, if I remember right, was borne out by the aspect of a large field of glebe land that had been put to pasture. A field of black Tartar oats which we saw looked excellent, and was estimated to produce seven quarters to

the acre, as also did the late turnips drilled after vetches, which seemed to have benefited by three days' recent rain, Sainfoin was a big crop on the limestone, and the wheats were well strawed, but not expected to produce more than from three and a half to four quarters to the acre, the barleys—none of which were got in until April 19—being laid at from four to five quarters. The worst field that we saw on the farm was a clover•ley that had been mown and was to be folded over. Here the clover seemed generally to be more or less of a failure in the season of 1901.

The sheep, of which he had 200, were Oxford Downs. I understood Mr Hughes to say that the Oxford Down was produced originally by crossing the Cotswold and Hampshire Down sheep; also that certain strains of them have South Down or Leicester blood. He had been unfortunate that lambing season, having lost eight per cent of his ewes. His pigs were Tamworth and Berkshire, and he said that he consumed more of his home-grown corn than he used to do—perhaps a third—in addition to hay and cake. Beans they seldom grew. The price of calves in that district was about 45s., of finished beasts about £20, and of stores about £13; but he thought that there was more profit hanging to the stores than to the fatted cattle. He did not consider that of 1901 a bad season, except perhaps for the graziers, who had suffered from the drought. These, however, had done little of late years, as the price of stores had been high, and that of beef low. His own opinion was that a man could do as well on a half-and-half farm as on one that was all grass. Mr. Hughes's buildings, I should add, which were built of stone and thatched, seemed good and substantial.

Mr. Hall's bailiff held strong views on the labour question. He thought that before long farmers would not be able to get the work done, as there were plenty of them in the district who were desperately pinched for labour. The men, he declared, were different from what he remembered; now when they got home in the evening they wanted to put on a nice suit of clothes and walk about with a little cane in

their hands. He did not think that small-holdings would keep them. What they wanted was more money, and then they would stay. I asked him if he thought the land could pay it, to which he replied enigmatically, 'Ah! there you are.' He told me that Mr. Hall took 1s. a gallon on his sheep-walk, and had a daily sale of fifty gallons. During the spring flush there was a surplus for butter making, but as it required three gallons of milk to produce a pound of butter, he held that if they were to go in for that business they must have a separate herd. Then, at the end of July, the cows were receiving cabbages only in addition to grass.

At Great Rollright also I saw Mr. Frank Dormer, the schoolmaster, who had been in charge there for over eight years. He told me that three-quarters of the young men and all the young women left the village at nineteen or twenty years of age, only the dullest staying at home. Occasionally they returned to see their parents, and many of them said they would gladly come back if they could earn more money. The local agricultural wage with extras amounted to about 15s. a week, and he thought the time was coming when this must be increased. He believed that a rise of 3s. a week would stay, or greatly diminish, the exodus. There were, however, no really poor people in the parish, but the cottages were not very good, thirty or forty of them having less than five rooms all told. The population had sunk from 349 in 1891 to 318 in 1901. Eight years before he had eighty scholars on the books; in 1901 there were but fifty-nine. There were more boys than girls, and the proportion of attendance was 92 per cent. of the number registered.

Mr. Aubrey J. Spencer, of Wheatfield, Tetworth, in the southern division of the county, where he owns an estate of 800 acres, has kindly furnished me with a report on the labour conditions in that district. Of these and other agricultural matters Mr. Spencer is particularly well qualified to speak, as he was one of the Assistant Commissioners to the late Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression,

and in that capacity reported on several districts in the south of England. He said that the land in his neighbourhood was pretty good, although on the Chiltern Hills things were in a very bad way. They had been hard hit by the depression, but were to some extent kept afloat through the help of the London milk trade. Most of the farmers in his neighbourhood who had suitable land, sent their milk to London, and although there were many drawbacks to this sort of farming, as all who could seemed to take it up, he conceived that it had paid, and continued to pay, fairly well. In former times butter used to be made, but this had been quite abandoned in favour of milk selling.

There, as elsewhere, labour was a great difficulty, and it was especially hard to find milkers, at which he was not altogether surprised, as the work was dirty, and must be carried on on Sundays as well as weekdays. Also it necessitated very early hours, since summer and winter they began to milk about 4 A.M. Many of the farmers themselves assisted, or made their sons assist, in the milking. Consequently it was of advantage to such men to have one or two sons living at home with them, and Mr. Spencer attributed the comparative prosperity of his principal tenant in great measure to the help his three sons had given him.

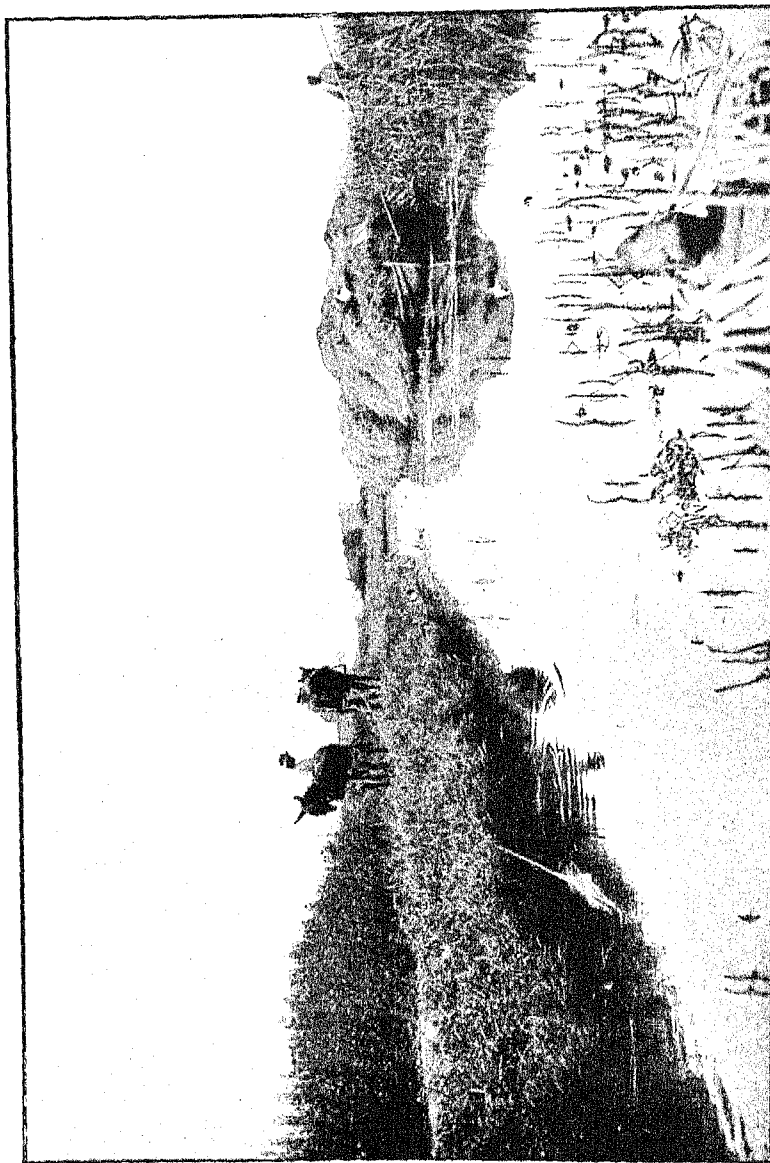
In Tetsworth they had several empty cottages, and very naturally, as he thought, the labourers objected to live in houses that were in the hands of farmers. Many of the cottages were old and dilapidated, but the rent charged was only from 1s. to 1s. 6d. a week. He had built two excellent new ones, and could, however, let them at a higher rent. The milkers generally served for about a year and then shifted off to another farm. Some of the farmers were, he said, still very short-sighted in their dealings with the labourers, forbidding them to keep a pig or poultry, or to have any land beyond a small allotment. With this exception, they were good-hearted, hard-working men, and, to judge from the case of his own tenants, they farmed very well. They kept more poultry than they used to do, and

moveable fowl-houses, which did not, however, improve the partridge shooting, were very common on the fields. Labour was extremely short, but employers still seemed to have just enough men to enable them to scrape along, though not so many as the land really required. As a landlord, except in very busy times, he could obtain men for extra garden work, wood cutting or beating, although often they were not worth much, but the labourers liked working for a landlord better than for a farmer. This, as I have shewn, is the case throughout England.

Rents in Oxfordshire had, he estimated, fallen about 30 per cent. on good land, and much more on the light land of the Chiltern Hills, which hardly seemed worth cultivating. Landlords were consequently poor, and were also called upon to spend their income on repairs and improvements to an extent that was unknown in the old days. Mr. Spencer thought that labourers were in any case likely to drift away to towns in order to better themselves, but he was of opinion that the loss would be diminished by the provision of good cottages and a liberal supply of allotments and small-holdings. Many of their young men had gone soldiering, and some of them had come back from the ranks to work on the land. Two young fellows who had served their time returned to the village to milk cows and do other agricultural work, but, rather to their disgust, were called up with the Reserve and sent to South Africa.

To sum up, he did not regard the agricultural position as hopeless in his part of Oxfordshire. He believed that farmers could still make a living on good land at the existing reduced rents; indeed some of them were obviously doing so. The chief local stumbling-blocks were the insufficient supply of labour, the distance from the railway, and the bad train service.

With reference to this labour question Mr. J. Andrews Slater, of Hill House, Somerton, Banbury, a well-known tenant farmer and poultry expert in that district, wrote to me: 'I may say that only this day five young men have left



SEDGE HARVEST, WICKEN LODE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

the next village for London, and we are so short of labour that we cannot get our work done, but it is looked upon as a disgrace to work upon the land.'

Mr. T. Tindall Wildridge, of Sunny Side, Islip, Oxon, said that he had taken every opportunity of studying the labouring class in his locality. He was secretary to the village cricket club, chairman of the Men's Institute and of the parish Council, and anything else that enabled him to observe and know the people. Islip was a purely agricultural village of some 600 inhabitants. As its youth grew up they drifted citywards, upwards of thirty having left Islip in 1900. The chief attraction to them was work on the railways in or near London, or rather the superiority of the wage for that work over land pay. The best young men went, the worst—the dullards and the least energetic—remained. As they grew up they fell more or less into the 'habits of beer.' Nearly all who saved ceased to be mere labourers.

Mr. E. J. Bishop, of Budnall Farm, Haddenham, near Thame, wrote a letter in which he said that the failing industry of agriculture had been overlooked and slighted by the Press and public, to a large extent because of the great agricultural shows. These shows, which had come to be simply exhibitions of the pet herds, studs, and flocks of noblemen and gentlemen who were altogether independent of agriculture, were entirely misleading to the public mind and to our legislators, who there saw only the sunny side and artificial face of the business. Doubtless there is truth in Mr. Bishop's contention, and those who judge of farming interests from the reports of agricultural shows alone are apt to gather a false idea of the state of the case, since such shows are perhaps principally patronised by the wealthy and by large breeders who wish to work up the reputation of their stock. Still it must be remembered that they do good in many ways. Especially is this so in the case of the smaller local gatherings, which really act as feeders to the large shows and tend to stimulate a healthy competition among the farmers of the neighbourhoods where they are held.

A drawback to these provincial shows, however, as I have had frequent cause to observe recently, is that they are a great deal too much devoted to the exhibition of horses shewn, not by farmers who breed them, but by dealers who wish to sell them. Often enough the classes devoted to agricultural exhibits and to stock are very poorly supported, and excite moreover, little or no interest among the visitors, who come to see the fancy driving and the performance at the water-jump. Without these attractions indeed there would, in fact, often be no company to speak of, and, as a consequence, no gate money. Large turnips and fat pigs do not attract any considerable section of the public.

Through Mr. A. C. Hall I have been kindly furnished with information on the Watlington district, Chiltern Hills, by Mr. J. B. Watson, agent to Lord Macclesfield, of Shirburn Castle, Tetsworth, who owns very extensive estates, and by Mr. F. D. Holiday, who farms 500 acres, and is a member of the firm of Paxton & Holiday, who do a large business as auctioneers at Bicester. Mr. Watson wrote that he should say that the standard wage in his district was from 12s. to 13s. for labourers and 14s. for carters, with 40s. or 50s. at Michaelmas—unless in lieu thereof they were given the opportunity of piecework in harvest. The rents varied very much; probably 18s. would be an average for the Downhill land, and 10s at the outside for the Chilterns. These represented a fall of from a third to a half since the good times. The proportion of old pasture on the hills was small, usually but a few paddocks near the homesteads, or, say, 10 per cent. of the extent of the larger farms; but a considerable area was laid to temporary grass and a good deal remained down in very poor pasture which originally had been seeded for a two or three years' ley. Probably, including both descriptions, a good third of the land was under temporary or permanent grass. On the Downhill there was a much larger proportion of grass, and between Watlington and Thame lay a good stretch of vale country that was chiefly pasture. Perhaps half-and-

half would fairly describe the district immediately round Watlington.

Uphill the cultivation generally consisted of a four-course system : wheat ; roots, barley, or oats ; peas or clover ; and wheat again, unless it was varied by keeping the land two or three years in grass. No special crop was grown in the district. Downhill the wheat was usually on the better land and followed by barley of much finer quality than that grown after roots, then roots, then barley or oats, succeeded half by clover and half by beans.

The soil on the Chilterns was chiefly a gravelly clay loam overlying the chalk, and so little derived from or mixed with it that, as I have mentioned was the case in Dorsetshire, in more prosperous times a great deal of chalk was dug and spread on the surface with excellent results to the land. On the slope the chalk cropped out and the soil was lighter. Descending towards the vale the soil which lay over the lower green-sand contained a good deal of gravel and marl. Still further down it was chiefly clay loam.

The sheep of the country was the Hampshire, but Oxford Downs were kept, especially on the pasture farms, and some of the farmers crossed their flocks, chiefly for lamb-fattening purposes. The cattle were Shorthorns, on the smaller hill-farms a good deal crossed with Jerseys and other breeds. The horses were Shires which had been much improved of late years, and the pigs almost exclusively of the Berkshire strain.

Mr. Holiday wrote that in the Bicester district wages varied slightly, but daymen received 12s. and stockmen from 14s. to 16s. a week. To give the exact average of rents would be impossible, but 18s. an acre could not be far from the mark. The proportion of pasture was very nearly half of the area. Light land was principally farmed on a four- and heavy on a five-course system. The greater part of the pasture was suitable to dairying and growing young stock, and portions of the meadow land to the south-east of the district were mown and the hay sold off. No special crops

were grown out of the usual course, except that farmers occasionally took an extra cut of oats. The subsoils were limestone rock, gravels, and clay. Oxford Downs were almost exclusively kept on sheep farms, but on lands not adapted to breeding flocks various kinds of sheep were bought in at the latter end of summer and lambed down, after which the ewes and as many as possible of the lambs were sold off. Nearly all the cattle were Shorthorns, but a few small herds of Jerseys were kept by gentlemen in the district. The horses were almost wholly of the Shire breed, and the pigs were Berkshires and the sandy and black Oxford spotted strain.

Mr. William Muscott, schoolmaster of Garsington, about four miles from Oxford, informed me that in this village the farmers were progressive and the use of machinery made up for the want of labour. About a dozen of the peasants possessed a horse and cart apiece. The labourers were excellent. They went daily to other villages as their services were needed, had large allotments, and carried on market gardening to supply the Oxford demand. The land was all college property: there were no resident landlords, and the people were independent and robust. The cottages were bad and no ground was to be had on which to build new ones. Gardening was taught at the school.

I was particularly sorry that circumstances prevented me from accepting Mr. Muscott's kind invitation to visit Garsington, both because I should have been pleased to meet these enterprising and energetic labourers and for another reason. When I was a lad of about ten—now longer ago than I care to think of—I spent some two years in this village as a pupil of the rector of that day, the Rev^d Mr. Graham. Almost opposite to the gate of the rectory there lived, I remember, a little farmer named Quatermain, a name that I have since made use of, but which seems to have vanished now from the list of the inhabitants of the village. Very well can I recall the old gentleman, tall, thin, grey-haired, and clad in a white smock-frock of a sort that is no longer

seen, stopping to chat with me, two buckets of milk swinging from the yoke upon his shoulders. Although I knew little of agriculture in those days, or I may add of anything else, we were good friends, and he had a walnut tree that produced the largest nuts I ever saw, with which I made close acquaintance, afterwards using the shells that I had emptied as boats to sail upon a pond. Also in the churchyard at Garsington stood a splendid yew, and on the rectory lawn a hollow pollard elm where I used to play with a little maid now long departed.

Some years ago I drove over from Oxford to see the place. The hollow elm and the ancient yew still stood, but the quaint, grey, old rectory that was once, I think, the place of refuge of Trinity College in times of plague, had been ruthlessly destroyed and replaced by a modern building which I did not admire. Also—like my own youth and my playmate—old Quatermain had gone, and there were none else there whom I remembered or who remembered me. I think that I felt somewhat as we may imagine those might feel, who were allowed after a lapse of a century or two of time, to revisit the spot of earth with which in life they had been familiar and intimately connected. The landscape, the stone stiles on the field foot paths, the roads, the houses, and even some of the trees might be the same, but the faces, ah! how different.

Of Oxfordshire I may say that, agriculturally, except on the poor Uplands it seems, on the whole, to be holding its own as well as most counties. In many districts, however, the labour question is becoming increasingly troublesome.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

THE central county of Northamptonshire is about seventy miles in length from north-east to south-west, and from seven to twenty-five miles in breadth, with an area of about 641,000 acres. In Messrs. Bacon's 'Library Atlas of the British Isles,' published in 1900, the area is given on both the maps of Northamptonshire at 1,356,173 acres, but surely here there must be some strange mistake. In the north-east of the county, near to Peterborough, are rich fenlands, while the uplands have a good brown loam soil. In the southern part, and indeed throughout the county generally, there is an enormous amount of pasture, three-fifths of the acreage being, I believe, in permanent grass. On these grass lands, which require so little labour, the population is thin and dwindling, and the villages are few and small. In passing over miles and miles of them, nearly everywhere I noticed that, as was proved by the high well-marked 'lands,' they had at some time or other been under the plough. Now in connection with this matter two questions seem to arise: (1) By whom were all these hundreds of thousands of acres, naturally well adapted to grass, devoted to the production of cereals, and for what purpose? (2) When and why was the cultivation of corn abandoned on them?

To deal with the latter query first. I had long suspected that this grass has been down for many centuries, but as I could find no documentary evidence of the fact, and of course upon such a subject tradition is silent, for means of proof I was obliged to fall back upon my own wits. It occurred to me that if I could find really ancient trees growing upon the actual crests of *continuous* and unbroken 'lands,' as it is impossible for a plough to be drawn through a tree trunk,

this would show that they must have ceased to be arable before such trees grew. So I began to search and make inquiries. The latter were fruitless, as none seem to have thought of this test as a key to the problem, but, as I have mentioned, on Mr Hall's farm in Oxfordshire I found trees of about 200 years' growth standing upon well-defined lands in a pasture, showing that a couple of centuries ago it was already pasture. Continuing my researches in the beautiful park of Fawsley, Sir Charles Knightley's property, most of which clearly has been under the plough, I discovered, standing on the crest of lands of the usual character, some oaks and an ash pollard that in my judgment must be at least 500 years old. Therefore, almost without possibility of doubt, the cultivators of this soil must have ceased to plough it more than four centuries since.

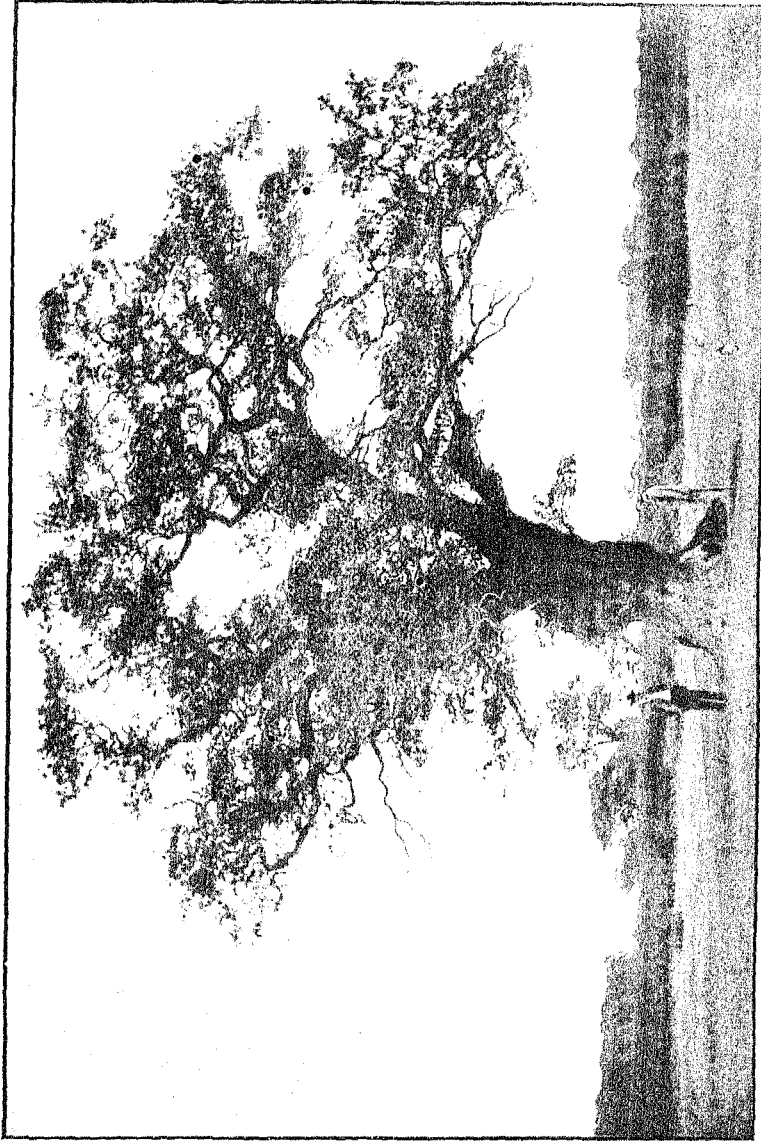
It was, however, upon Mr Burton's farm in Yorkshire, about eight or ten miles from York, that in going over a farm the tenant asked me if I should like to see their old oak. I went to look at it to find that it also stood upon the crest of a well-marked and unmistakeable land. Of this tree I reproduce the photograph that we took. I have given some attention to the growth and age of timber, and it is my opinion that the oak in question cannot have seen less than seven centuries. Therefore, for the reasons I have advanced above, seven centuries since, the field on which it grew, that had evidently been under the plough for a long previous period, had already gone down to grass. It seems, then, I am safe in supposing that many of these ridge and furrow pasture areas which have been ploughed, that is, nearly all of them, are of no recent creation. Why did they cease to be ploughed?

I suggest that the principal cause was the Black Death of the fourteenth century, which is said to have killed out quite a quarter of the population of Europe, and in many cases devastated entire districts. Of this pestilence Garner ('Annals of the British Peasantry') says: 'At the close of 1348 the Black Death swept over the face of the land,

decimating the manorial populations and annihilating whole villages. The predial services which had effected the cultivation of large areas of the manorial soil ceased, and half the lease-holding husbandmen perished . . . Farmers were unable to till their own land, much less to perform their service on the demesnes. The common fields were overrun with the unherded live stock off the waste. The village lanes were silent as the grave.' Would not this sudden cessation of the supply of labour account for the abandonment of the corn lands, which in time went down to natural grass?

We know that at one period England, being less harassed by wars than other countries, was a great granary. I believe I am right in saying that from the Conquest until the reign of Edward III. the exportation of corn was prohibited, after which it was permitted, if the price at home did not exceed 6s. 8d. a quarter. But—and this is one of the puzzles—at the time of the occurrence of the Black Death such exportation was not allowed; therefore all that was grown must have been kept for home consumption. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and onwards we know also that the woollen trade was carefully fostered in England, even to the extent of the ultimate enactment that every corpse must be buried in a woollen shroud, a custom that continued during the eighteenth century, as can be proved by an instance I have quoted in 'A Farmer's Year' (page 260). I suggest that it was after the great transition from arable to pasture, which the rise and progress of this trade may have hastened and intensified, that large areas of England ceased to produce corn, and were devoted to the production of wool, to be during the Napoleonic wars again given up to corn.

To pass now to the first question. Who cultivated these vast expanses in the early Middle Ages? The growth of corn, as we are all aware, takes a great deal of labour, and the presence of a great deal of labour means a large population, even in these days of improved agricultural machinery.



ANCIENT OAK GROWING ON THE RIDGE OF A 'LAND,' SHOWING THAT THE FIELD MUST ALREADY HAVE BEEN DOWN
TO GRASS WHEN THIS TREE WAS PLANTED MANY CENTURIES AGO

What can it have meant when under-draining was unknown, and the cumbersome instrument that was called a plough must be dragged by eight or twelve oxen! Yet there are the 'lands,' 8 lands, most of them, along which the oxen must have walked and their drivers and voorloopers trudged, since none can dispute the actual evidence that their appearance affords. We are told that in those centuries the population of rural England was exceedingly sparse. All I have to say is that in Northamptonshire and other counties, it would appear to have been more plentiful than it is in the twentieth century, since even if it were wished to do so, sufficient men would not now be forthcoming to keep these expanses of grass under the plough.

There is, however, another possible solution. All this cultivation may date back to a very much earlier period, when an unknown England was densely inhabited. Such lands would retain their rounded shape for countless years, and it may chance, therefore, that those whose labours gave them that shape, lived in Roman or pre-Roman days. I can express no definite opinion upon the subject which has interested me much; but I venture to submit the results of my personal research to the consideration of others, who may be able finally to elucidate a very difficult problem.

Our host at Fawsley, a village of some sixty inhabitants situated about four miles south of Daventry, was Sir Charles Knightley, Bart, whose family have been lords of this manor since the reign of Henry V. Sir Charles, who owns an estate in this neighbourhood of 9,000 acres, all of which he manages himself without the help of agent or bailiff, said that the agricultural industry of those parts had gone down very much of late years, the rents having fallen from 30 to 35 per cent. Feeding-land farms commanded about 26s. the acre, and dairy and other land down to 23s. Perhaps the average might be put at 24s. the acre, though he had property at Weedon and Woodford close to a station that fetched 30s. and 35s. The land was five-sixths pasture, and the average acreage of the farms about 300; he owned

twenty of that size. Most of the farmers bought in bullocks in the autumn or spring, and fattened them out. This business was a gamble which succeeded if you could buy cheap and sell dear. It used to be thought that the grazier should make £5 on a bullock, but now £3 would be nearer the mark. In 1901 stores which had been bought in at £12 or £16 were being sold out at from £17 to £21.

Some of the tenants had dairies, bred calves, and fattened them out, and a few sent milk to London, but this practice was on the wane. A certain number of sheep were fed with the bullocks. In that district there was not much competition for farms and the farmers had been depressed by the droughts. Sir Charles had six large holdings which were occupied by men from Devonshire, who appeared to be coming into the county in considerable numbers. As a class he thought the landlords had been hit the hardest, having lost from 30 to 40 per cent. of their incomes. The grazing business necessitated very little labour, perhaps two men on 300 acres, one to a hundred acres being a full supply. These men who tended the cattle were called 'shepherds.'

All the villages were very small and scattered, and Charwelton and others showed about five per cent. fall at the last census. The wages were 13s. in winter and 14s. in summer. There was no difficulty in getting sufficient men for ordinary needs, but if extra hands were wanted at haysel or other times, it was hard to find them. The supply of cottages was ample, but for the most part they were small. The great majority of the cattle were Shorthorns, but they also grazed Herefords and the Devonshire men kept Devons. The subsoil was clay with a rich surface and occasional patches of gravel, the highest lands being mostly of a light character.

The expense of the upkeep of his estate Sir Charles reckoned, I think, at nearly 25 per cent. of the receipts. Unlike North Northamptonshire, where there are many fine country seats, here the residences are very scarce; in fact there were few gentry and practically no society. Indeed

Sir Charles went so far as to say that were it not for the hunting there would be nobody in the district. The old tag which says that Northamptonshire is remarkable for 'springs, spires, and squires' does not therefore apply to this part of the county, at least in so far as the squires are concerned. The springs and spires are, however, plentiful enough, some of the churches being very beautiful. That of St. Mary at Fawsley, which stands in the park, is built of stone and has a fine clerestoried nave and carved oak pews. Also there are some very interesting monuments and brasses erected to the memory of the Knightley family, the oldest of which date from the early sixteenth century. I imagine, however, that the congregation on Sundays must be select.

The park itself is one of the most perfect I ever saw, and remarkable for its rolling swards backed by woodland, its plentiful, ancient timber trees, its two lakes, where I tried to catch pike and failed in the attempt; its remains of Roman entrenchments, and the beautiful shell of an old ruined hall or dower house. The mansion, also, which is built on three sides of a quadrangle, and contains a great hall, dating, if I remember aright, from the time of Henry VII, is a fine example of an old English country house, and one that has seen much history.

The first tenant of Sir Charles Knightley's whom I visited was Mr. Mitchell, a gentleman who came from Devonshire some ten years before. He held, I think, about 300 acres of grass land, and was considered to be a good grazier. His farm consisted of large pasture fields with tall hedges, one or two of which covered sixty acres of land. Nearly all of these were old meadows, but there was, I remember, an exception which had been laid down a quarter of a century before, and was making very good grass. All his cattle received from six to eight pounds of cake a day. For the most part they were Shorthorns bought in at an average price of £10, which he expected to fetch £19 when they went out, after having consumed cake to the value of 50s. a head. He also kept North and South Wales 'runts'—black cattle with

long horns, of which that of South Wales is the larger breed. The Devons, he said, cost too much to buy in, although they sold better in London.

Mr. Mitchell did not take any hopeful view of the prospects of his industry. Indeed he stated that 'grazing is a thing of the past.' He explained that the transit of animals from abroad was now perfected; that the class of foreign cattle imported was improving, and that the oxen which arrived at Deptford from over sea, looked no worse on landing than did those that had made the journey from Northamptonshire to London in a cattle truck. I suggested that cheap Canadian and other 'stores' might help them, but he replied, with much good sense, that if these stores were allowed to come in, pleuro-pneumonia might come with them, which 'would be the last nail in our coffin.' He pointed out also that the profit of graziers was very small, and that however great their care, they sometimes had bad luck. Thus one or two bullocks worth £20 apiece might die and take away all the gain on a dozen others. Still he said that good farms let well, although for those which were second or third rate there was no competition.

Few farmers, he thought, made much in Northamptonshire, and as a rule those who seemed to be doing well in life 'cut up badly when they died—their fortunes died with them.' The year of 1901 was a bad one for graziers, worse even than 1893, the hay crop not having been above a third of the average. As a rule no hay was sold off the farms. The labour was dearer and scarcer than it used to be, and he estimated the capital required by graziers at £10 the acre. In addition to his horned stock Mr Mitchell kept 120 Oxford Down sheep.

That afternoon we walked several miles through the broiling heat across grass field after grass field in ancient ridge and furrow, to a farm where Sir Charles Knightley was putting up some new buildings. One of the features of this country is the plague of flies with which it is infested, brought thither, I suppose, by the cattle. Their number was

literally innumerable, and we trudged along surrounded by black and buzzing halos of these annoying insects, of which I never saw more outside of the Isle of Ascension and certain mns in South Africa. Here the hedges were nearly all 'doubles,' and the gates high and not to be jumped, so that the hunt must make its way through and not over them. Gradually the land rose, the highest point we touched being, I believe, 600 feet above the sea level. On this ground the grass comes late and does not begin to grow before May but the bullocks are kept out and do well in the open until November. The view from a field called the Stonepit Ground, was an impressive, lovely scene of greenery and huge enclosures. All around lay miles of grass land, dotted with herds of grazing cattle and single trees, backed by masses of dense wood, North Badby Wood, East Everdon Stubbs Wood, and others, while below lay Fawsley House and the shimmering lake. But on all this huge expanse no human being could I see, and no sounds could I hear except the bleating of sheep and the notes of water-fowl among the rushes.

The outlook from the rectory of Preston Capes, whither Sir Charles drove us on another day, was, I remember, even more striking, although the prospect was somewhat spoiled by haze. Looking northward, stretching for miles upon miles, was a vast expanse of hill and vale. Many such vistas have I seen in foreign countries, such as Africa, South America, Iceland, and elsewhere, but here was a difference created by the hand of man which for many generations has left its impress upon the landscape. In a field immediately beneath this rectory there were, I recall, the finest wych-elmns that I ever saw.

The Rev. Mr. Evans, the Rector of Preston Capes, told me that the population had sunk since the previous census, and that there were no young men in the village, and no skilled labourers under fifty years of age. Although they were not much better off in the towns the youths migrated thither, as they found village life too monotonous. So much

of the land was laid down to grass, however, that the question of labour was not very vital. In this parish all the soil seemed to have been under the plough at some previous time, and everywhere appeared 'curly lands,' hardly a level field or a straight furrow being visible. Mr. Evans thought that these lands went down to grass when wool became a staple industry, and that the village was formerly much larger than it is to-day.

Mr. Newberry, who was also a Devonshire man, had held the Westcombe Farm of 400 acres, of which 103 were arable, for seven or eight years at a rent, I think, of 23s. the acre. Like so many others with whom I have spoken, Mr. Newberry had left his native county because a reduction of rent was refused to him in the bad times, to come into one where land was cheaper. He said that he could not call farming in Northamptonshire very profitable, but with economy it was possible to get along and pay 20s. in the pound, although there was nothing left over 'to put in the box.' He milked a dairy of thirty cows, reared all the calves, and if he saw a chance occasionally bought a truck load of beasts, although his land, which was good breeding ground, would not fat Shorthorns. These Shorthorns, in his opinion, could not compare with the Devons, which cost him 7s. a head to bring up from Devonshire, and would fetch a farthing a pound more as beef than either Shorthorns or black Welsh cattle. He said that those from the north of the county were the original and typical Devons, which should be small, long, and low in shape.

Mr. Newberry's custom was to separate his milk and send his butter to London, the village and the barracks at Weedon taking all that he could spare. The calves were fed on the separated milk and scalded linseed cake, and to his pigs he gave cod-liver oil, which, he remarked, would often pull a litter through in a cold time. The reader may remember that Mr. Story-Maskelyne in Wiltshire gave the cod-liver oil to his calves, but I have no doubt that it is equally good for both classes of animals. Labour, Mr.

Newberry said, was a difficulty, as if he got rid of a man there was trouble in replacing him. The labourers had been drawn to the Great Central Railway while the works were in progress, and now did not like coming back to the lower agricultural wage. His labour cost 18s. the acre, as the rearing of a number of calves made work. Here—and this was an unusual story—the women would milk; indeed he said that some of them could ‘knock down,’ that is, strip, nine or ten cows without difficulty.

Mr. Newberry also kept sheep and a flock of eighty ewes, the culled ewes and wethers being fed on turnips, and the young, bearing ewes upon grass. The fatted wethers were sold out from January to July at about 50s. a head. The average cast of his farm was about four and a half quarters of wheat, four quarters of barley, and five and a half quarters of oats. He said that it was a peculiar class of land which occasionally seemed to affect the health of animals. Thus the dairy cows were subject to inflammation of the udder, from which cause he had lost several of them four years before, and there was a certain field on which if lambs of about two weeks old were put, they would die. On the whole, however, he thought that a farmer might go further and fare worse. Mr. Newberry was of opinion that beef did not pay, and that the graziers were depressed. However, as he pointed out, the losses of farmers must all fall back upon the landlord. ‘If I can’t pay my rent he must let the farm for less: tenants will hop the twig before they lose all their feathers.’ The labourers, he declared, were doing better than either the owner or the farmer.

While staying with Sir Hereward Wake, Bart., of Courteenhall, the first farmer whom I saw was Mr. John Gudgeon, of The Lodge, Blisworth, who rented 250 acres, of which fifty were grass, under the Duke of Grafton. Mr. Gudgeon, whose forefathers had held this farm for four generations before him—over 150 years—said that the farmers in that neighbourhood had been living up to then, but whether they could continue to do so was a question which he was scarcely

able to answer. The rent of his land, which was a light loam over iron- and lime-stones, with clay in patches, used to be 32s. an acre in 1875, and in 1901 was 23s. and rates. Where farms had been let down, however, they would fetch as little as 10s. the acre. No holdings had been unoccupied in Blisworth, but he stated that tenants seemed to love changing about a great deal more than they used to do. The general practice was to keep a few cows and rear some calves, which were sold out as stores at Northampton market in the spring. Also he kept from eighty to a hundred Oxford Down ewes, and if he could get 37s. a head for the lambs, sold them; if not he held them till the following February and marketed them fat off the turnips. His custom was to buy in ewes and sell out the cast ones during summer, when they made the best price, as old meat would always keep better than young in hot weather.

In walking over Mr. Gudgeon's farm I saw a very good field of cabbages, and another of swedes and hybrid turnips sown in alternate breadths. The barleys were estimated to return five quarters, and the wheats barely four quarters to the acre. Oats, he informed us, had been a complete failure during the last few years, as they wanted rain and there was none. The only artificial manure he used was soot sown on the clover leys in the proportion of not less than 5 cwt. to the acre, and ploughed in for wheat, at a cost of 3s. 6d. a ton for the sowing and 43s. a ton for the soot.

With reference to labour Mr. Gudgeon said that history repeated itself, as there had been times before when people went away and returned, which they would do again. The men received good wages, 2s. 6d. a day, with extra for haysel and harvest, equalling 17s. a week for labourers, and up to £1 a week with houses for waggoners and shepherds. The Duke of Grafton's cottages, he added, were plentiful and good, with three rooms up and three down stairs. This farm, I observed, had been extensively worked for lime- and iron-stone, the top soil being replaced after the mineral had been

removed, a process which altered the level in many places and did not improve its appearance.

At Quenton, a parish four and a half miles south-east of Northampton, I visited Mr Sydney Smith, who farmed 600 acres of stone brash land on a limestone subsoil with some clay and damp loamy soil. This farm, I think I am right in saying, had sold for £16,000 not long before, but Mr Sydney Smith was the fourth member of his family who had occupied it during successive generations. He said that rents in the district had fallen from 25 to 30 per cent. since the good times, and that they varied from 12s. to 35s. the acre, according to position and quality of the holding. In 1901 the crops looked very bad, except where the land was in good heart and well farmed, and farmers needed to work hard to make both ends meet. In short the outlook was black and the demand for farms was beyond his understanding, but a great many people took a holding and dragged everything they could out of the land. After such people had done with it, a farm was nothing but a millstone round a man's neck. There was a great deal of badly farmed land in the county, especially in the Wellingborough district. He supposed that folk kept on farming because it was a business to which they were accustomed; thus if he gave up he did not know what else he could do. As it was, if a man made his rent and 4 per cent. on his capital, he did well.

Mr. Smith's own system was to treat the land liberally so as to obtain the highest possible returns, and as a result he had the best crop of roots in the neighbourhood. Here he did not exaggerate, for I saw them afterwards and remember that they looked splendid. Three quarters of his acreage used to be arable, but in 1901 only 280 acres remained under the plough, as the land took grass well and had been laid down in permanent pasture. His course was roots, then two successive crops of barley (of which the second was generally the best), then seeds followed by wheat. He farmed high, feeding off the roots with sheep. His ewe flock he had, however reduced to 125, of Oxford and Hampshire Downs

crossed, as he found that, like everything else, the land wanted a rest from continual sheepling.

His cows were Shorthorns crossed with an Aberdeen Angus bull, and the heifers bred from them—all black or roan in colour—struck me as splendid animals, not very fat, but heavy as lead and of fine quality. Some of these he fed out with the bought stores. Altogether I thought Mr Sydney Smith a very good farmer and his land exceedingly well managed. The wheat, it is true, was rather light owing to the season, a four and a half quarter crop, but its colour was splendid. He said that he had no difficulty with labour, as men had been plentiful with him since the harvest of 1900. They came back because business in the towns, and especially the building trade in Northampton, was slack, and this hindered the young men from leaving the land. In 1900 some of them had left his farm, but they returned in the autumn. The quality of his labour was good and gave him no cause of complaint.

Mr. John Westlake, of East Lodge, Courteenhall, farmed 110 acres, of which thirty were grass. He was a Somersetshire man and had been four years in occupation of the holding, whereof I understood the rent had been reduced from £620 in the good times to £300 a year in 1901. The land he described as medium, good and bad together. He kept from forty to fifty cows and depended principally upon a milk-walk which he had in Northampton. Also he had a flock of 100 ewes, of which the lambs were sold out fat, and bought and grazed a certain number of store cattle. All his cultivation was done by steam, but Mr. Westlake said that he purchased more corn than he produced. The supply of labour was he thought more plentiful than it had been owing to the slackness of the Northampton building trade, but to procure really good men was difficult. The wages he estimated at 15s. a week, with a free house and £2 at harvest, his total outlay on this head amounting to 18s. or £1 an acre. Cottages were sufficient in number, but he added that the folk did not like living in a quiet place. Mr. Westlake

seemed to be of opinion that he was better off in Northamptonshire than he had been in Somerset, where the land was dearer to hire.

At the parish of Hartwell, on the borders of Buckinghamshire, I visited the Park Farm of 800 acres which was worked by Mr. J. Weston with the assistance of two sons, one of whom showed us over the place. Mr. Weston, junior, said that a little more than half their land was under grass, and that the soil was principally clay and loam, with, I think, a limestone subsoil, and too heavy to keep sheep on in winter. Indeed he described it as 'three and four horse land.' They had forty cows upon the place, producing up to 200 lb. of butter weekly, which was sold in Northampton. This was made without a separator in a beautifully clean, old-fashioned dairy, the skim-milk being fed to calves, of which eighty or ninety were brought up every year. Some of these calves, which it was Mr. Weston's custom to keep under shelter until the spring following their birth, were ultimately sold at about two years of age for breeding stock at Norwich market. There were also 150 Oxford Down ewes upon the farm and no fewer than sixteen breeding sows. All his cattle were of the Shorthorn stamp.

Labour, Mr. Weston said, was 'a bit short,' but owing to the decline of the Northampton building trade, a great deal better in 1901 than it had been in 1900. He added that it was necessary for the farmers to help with the work, or, as he put it, 'we have to tear into it ourselves'; also that the labourers must be very gently handled. 'You have to pay them and treat them as well.' The wages of ordinary men were 14s., and of cattlemen 16s. and a house, with double money at harvest and overtime at haysel. The boys would stop upon the land till they were sixteen or eighteen, but then they went away. On the 800 acres that they held they employed fourteen men and two or three boys. Mr. Weston's swedes were both early and good, indeed, I think about the best that we saw in the county. His wheat was estimated to yield nearly five quarters, and the oats six quarters, an acre. These

would fetch 25s. a quarter for old oats, but the price of corn was, he said, very bad. Indeed, he declared the prices 'kill us.' Rents, he informed me, had fallen about 25 per cent. in that neighbourhood, and that of this farm, which his father had held for twenty-four years, was, 1 gathered, 16s. an acre, and 12s. for a portion of the land which lay on the further side of the railway. Mr. Weston, junior, was of opinion that farmers could just keep going by dint of hard work and no more. I was told and noticed myself that the cottages in this immediate neighbourhood were scarce and bad, few of them having more than two bedrooms. They were for the most part built of stone and thatched.

At the little village of Ashton I saw Mr. Payne, of the Lodge Farm, who held 312 acres under the Duke of Grafton, of which 200 were grass, some of it, that had tumbled down eight or ten years before, of very indifferent quality. The rent of this place, which he described as 'a poor farm,' had descended by degrees from £2 an acre to 10s. 6d. an acre, which he paid. The soil he spoke of as 'awful stuff,' being yellow clay on limestone, with a thin loam atop. Indeed Mr. Payne declared that even the kitchen garden came up in great lumps, and that he had only one field on which he could grow roots, adding that it took four horses to plough the land, which produced no grass till the end of May. Under these circumstances it is hardly to be wondered at that he preferred to use steam cultivators at a cost of 13s. an acre plus £1 per ton for coal, which he must cart.

Water, he said, was a great difficulty, although there was plenty of it in the valley. When we met at the beginning of August he was employed in carrying it for the use of his horses and stock. He kept six cows, but said that he could keep ten if he had enough water for them. It was the lack of this necessary that had driven tenants away from the farm of which he was the third holder within a period of eight or nine years. He kept 120 ewes and lambs, holding sixty legs, which were sold out in the spring of the year. His system seemed to be: wheat, which gave an average yield of three

quarters ; vetches ; wheat again ; and beans, the last being a total failure in 1901. After roots came barley, that also returned three quarters only, with seeds which stood for two or three years and were followed by oats. Mr. Payne said that it was necessary to keep sheep, do them well, and sell them out at ten or eleven months old, as while corn paid for working and labour, sheep paid the rent. He always bred a few foals, the Duke giving his tenants the use of a sire free ; but in his own and the two neighbouring parishes there was not a single farmer left who rode to hounds.

Labour seemed to be scarce, and Mr. Payne did his own shepherding. He said that all the young men went to the towns as fast as they could, and that the girls went also. Any number of them had left him—9s. a week boys for the most part. Indeed the Wolverton people would come to the schoolmaster and ask for boys when there were some fit for service. Lads wanted 10s. and 11s. a week to keep them, but it was not possible to pay them men's wages. Were it not for machinery, which was a great help in dry summers, he declared that hundreds of acres of corn could not be cut in that neighbourhood. He knew that they ought to keep more labour, but it was not available ; and if the price of it rose much higher, landlords would get no rent at all. As for cottages, those provided by the Duke of Grafton were very good, and the same might be said of his own house and buildings. Mr. Payne, who I fear was engaged in a hard struggle with this unkindly land, complained of the shortness of his hay crop, and I noticed that a good many ears in the wheat seemed to be blighted.

Our host, Sir Hereward Wake, a considerable landowner both in Northamptonshire and Essex, did not think the prospect good either for landlords or for tenants, that is, if they depended upon what the land produced. He farmed 1,000 acres, and had another 160 coming on hand at the following Michaelmas, and said that he had spent more upon his property in the past fifteen years than he had received in rent. His view was that a landowner cannot live out of his

land, which had become 'a beautiful toy for rich men'. As for the farmers, the larger acreage they held, the better they thrived in Northamptonshire. The small men had to live like a well-to-do labourer, and their work if put into any other trade would give them a much better return. There was not water enough in the county to enable small-holders to thrive. Altogether, in his opinion, the prospects of the industry were very gloomy. In many places it was near to destruction, and he believed that this would be allowed to happen before Parliament or the people would stir a hand to help them.

Since Sir Hereward succeeded to his estate his rentals had fallen 50 per cent., and if they were put up for sale he said that he did not suppose that his farms would fetch £20 an acre. On the 1,000 acres which he had in hand he made 15s. an acre rent in 1900, but in 1899 he lost 3s. an acre and received no rent at all. Before this his receipts had averaged about 15s. an acre. He had twenty-seven cottages on the estate, eight of which he had built himself; but labour was becoming scarcer, and he said that the schoolmasters taught the lads to look down upon agriculture. However they got some boys from the Tiffield Reformatory, though as a rule these preferred to emigrate to Canada rather than stay in England. Also once he employed eight Salvation Army men, but they did not prove satisfactory. If they could afford to pay their hands 30s. a week, the labour question would, he thought, be solved.

Sir Hereward, although he could quote no precise authority, was of opinion that the thousands of acres of grass ridge and furrow of which I have spoken, were once one of the great granaries of Europe when the Continent was engaged in constant war, and that later they became a principal source of the world's wool supply. He pointed out that having produced corn for a period and sheep for a period, they were now entering on a third phase and producing beef. He also spoke of the great increase of the number of thistles on many of the pastures as a serious

evil. I may add that it is one which is very noticeable in some districts of the county

Mr. Gotto, of Northampton, and Stony Stratford, Bucks, with whom I had the pleasure of an interesting conversation, said that his firm of Durham, Gotto, & Samuel had between 20,000 and 30,000 acres of land in their charge, and not a farm to let, whereas nine years before they had eleven holdings for hire at a single office. Good farms were letting readily at times rents which had fallen 30 per cent. since the beginning of the depression. Thus for one of 450 acres, I think north of Northampton, where the farms are fine and well cultivated, they had three excellent applicants within twenty-four hours. On the gault lands, however, of North Bucks, which only grow wheat, and command as little as 10s the acre, tenants were difficult to find. In fact good land let and sold well, whereas the bad did neither. The fee-simple values would, as a rule, amount to twenty-five years' purchase, and at that price pay four per cent. on the capital invested in them. The old holders of land had suffered most; thus Mr. Gotto quoted the instance of an estate with which I think he had been connected, whereof the owner, some thirty years ago, had made a will leaving an income to his wife and the property to his eldest son, subject to the charges. The result was a friendly suit in Chancery and a settlement, under the terms of which the heir handed over the estate to his mother to satisfy her jointure.

Labour, Mr. Gotto said, was the most serious question connected with the future of agriculture, especially in the neighbourhood of big towns, where the lack of it was a great disadvantage. Thus on an estate which he mentioned at Beachampton, in North Bucks, they had not a single young hand left, Wolverton, where they found regular work, high wages, fixed holidays, and cheap fares, drawing them all away. It was difficult to forecast what time had in store for the industry when the prices and the labour troubles were borne in mind. Still, during the last two years, there had been no further decline, and for his own

part he would put any money he had into land and advise his clients not to sell at the prevailing prices. A farm which he had bought at £17 an acre, after being brought into order returned him five per cent. on his capital, and another estate of 1,000 acres that was sold in bad condition for £18,250 was also let to return five per cent. If once property was allowed to go down, its fee-simple value was lost, although it might pay to buy at a price. He thought, however, that it was unwise to purchase any land which was not intrinsically good. In conclusion, Mr. Gatto said he did not consider that the land was quite so well farmed as it had been, but that the feeling as to the future was more hopeful.

Mr. Gervase Cary-Elwes, whose father owns an estate at Great Billing in Northants, and another larger property in Lincolnshire, told me that farmers in the former county were making a living and no more, and were of rather an inferior class in comparison with what they used to be. In the livestock trade they just held their own, but it was a question whether they would continue to be able to do so. So long as a man cultivated his land well he jogged along, but if he scamped it the case was hopeless. The rents had fallen considerably, and there was no great competition for farms. Their property was close to the sewage farm near Northampton, which attracted the labour and made it difficult to obtain men. Mr. Cary-Elwes said that he could not see any prospect of improvement in the local agricultural conditions.

In Northampton I saw Mr. Brain, who was, I think, manager to Messrs. Peirce & Thorpe, auctioneers and land agents of that city. Mr. Brain said that the farming outlook was bad owing to the drougthy season; but whereas a few years before land was unsaleable, in 1901 it was in demand. For a good farm there were any amount of applicants; indeed their firm were looking out for such farms on behalf of sound men anxious to hire and could not find them. He did not think, however, that the majority of

farmers, many of whom were short of capital, did well unless they had some extraneous means to help them, nor could he see any great prospect for the future. Still farming was 'a lovely life' which accounted for a good deal. Farms within a mile of Northampton that had not much grass, were letting for as little as £1 an acre, but the average rents of good mixed farms were from 30s to 35s. an acre, according to quality. All the farmers grumbled about labour, for the most part with good reason, although on this matter different men had different stories to tell. Mr Brain informed me also that there was a good deal of depression in the city of Northampton, where the building and boot trades were not so prosperous as they had been. Indeed, he said that firms which carried on the latter business used to make 30 or 40 per cent on their capital, but now, owing to American competition, they were fortunate if they made 10 per cent. He added that almost all the machinery used was of American make.

At Northampton also I saw Mr. T. Cecil Woods, F.A.I., a member of the firm of Woods & Co., auctioneers and estate agents, and secretary to the local Chamber of Agriculture. Mr. Woods stated that the poor lands of the county were in the Wansford, Thrapston, Stanford, Wappenham, and Towcester districts, but that around Northampton, where more than half the land was arable, the agricultural position was not bad. Farmers, he said, always grumbled, but 'all I can tell you is that here we have a good class of men, many of whom are very well off. I don't think that during the last ten years any of them have made money, but we do not have many changes, and I have not heard of a bankrupt farmer . . . in my business I have never lost a shilling by a farmer . . . a man holds his own together and lives . . . The graziers, however, are making narrow profits, if any, owing to the dearness of stores.'

Mr. Woods said also that the demand for land was strong, and that sometimes there were as many as ten good applicants for one good farm; further, that the price of beef

was better. The labour, he informed me, was a great difficulty in 1900, but in 1901 the supply was much more plentiful throughout the county, and, although it was hard to find shepherds or waggoners, hands could be had of a sort. The young men went away, however, and the majority of those left on the farms were old, not very efficient, or 'half-sharp'. In his opinion the only way to keep people on the land was to pay them more money.

Because of this labour trouble those tenants did best who had families and made use of them. Some of their farmers were in a big way of business; thus at Lamport Mr. Watson and his brother fed no fewer than 600 bullocks. The average rents were about £1 an acre. The landlords, he thought, had been hard hit, but many of them—men like Lords Wantage and Spencer, for instance, who never lost a tenant—were among the best of their class. Mr. Woods believed that money could be made in Northamptonshire by the breeding of both Shire horses and hackneys.

An interesting experiment in co-operative farming was tried at Harlestone, four miles from Northampton, some years ago, but the results, according to Mr. W. H. Holloway, of the 'Mercury' office, Northampton, to whom I am indebted for this information, were not encouraging to believers in the system. It seems that Earl Spencer, having 300 acres of glebeland thrown upon his hands, agreed to allow it to be used by a co-operative farming association which was formed for the purpose of its working. He also agreed to provide a capital sum of £3,000 to bear interest at three per cent., and stipulated that he should be paid a rent equal to the market value of the farm. The co-operative tenants promised one third of the profits until the loan of £3,000 was repaid, by means of a sinking fund accumulated from the other two thirds. Mr. Holloway states that these men never lost a week's employment, received 14s. a week regularly, which was slightly above the average labourer's wage in the district, and worked hard, besides starting a dairy, butcher's shop, &c. For the first two years they lost

heavily, the third year they made a profit of £30, after which a run of ill luck brought the experiment to an end. How much of his £3,000 Lord Spencer recovered is not stated. For my own part, as I think I have already remarked, I am no great believer in co-operative farming, and this unfortunate instance only tends to confirm my lack of faith in it as a remedy for social and agricultural ills.

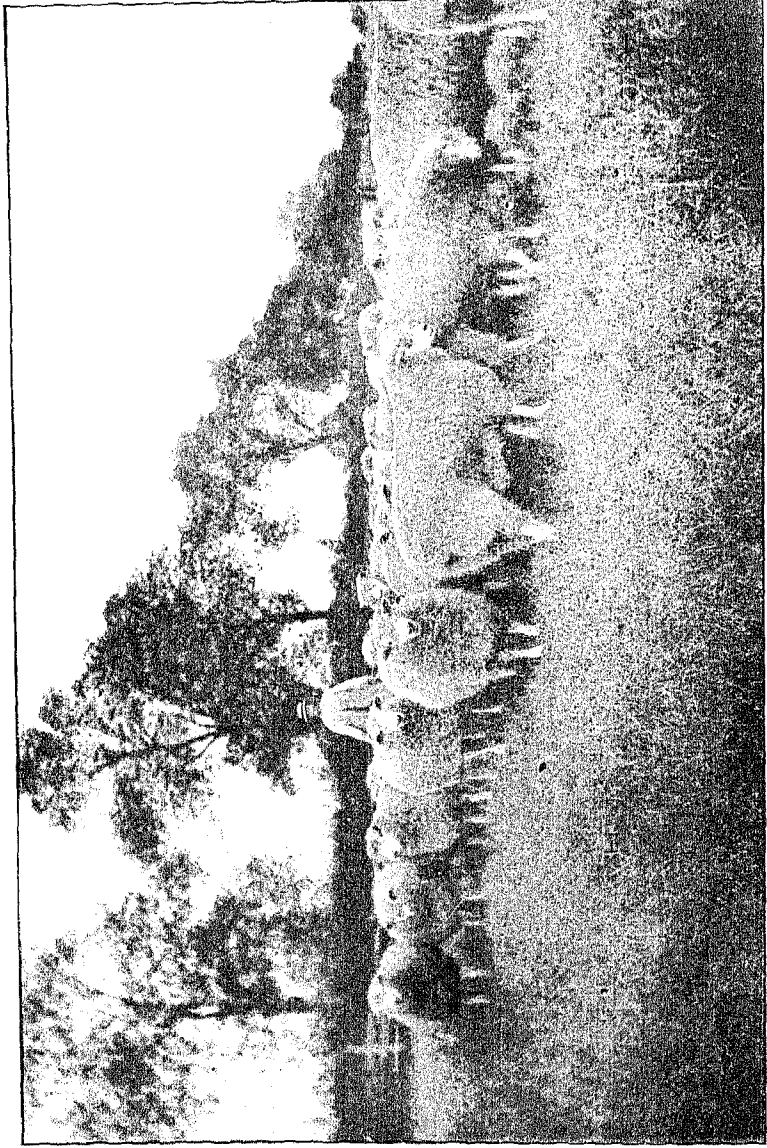
The reader will observe that the most optimistic reports collected by me in Northamptonshire were those that were given by land agents.

Those landlords whom I saw took on the whole a much gloomier view of things, and indeed, in my opinion, they have suffered more heavily than the tenant or the labourer. Nor were any of the farmers enthusiastic about their prospects, although they all admitted that there was a living to be made. Still when such men as Mr. Gotto and Mr. Woods say that the application for good farms is keen and continuous, they are speaking of what they know, and their statement tells its own tale. Probably the truth is that on the best lands there is still a certain measure of prosperity, sufficient at any rate to cause many who like the life to wish to occupy them; while the medium lands afford a living and the bad ones a mere existence to the occupier, and to the owner, after the payment of outgoings, practically no return at all.

LINCOLNSHIRE

THE eastern county of Lincolnshire is the second largest in England, having an area of nearly 1,700,000 acres, or about 2,760 square miles. Its greatest length from north to south is seventy-five miles, and from east to west forty-five miles. To those who are concerned with the land and agriculture this is perhaps the most deeply interesting county in all England. Popular conception often sets it down as a vast swamp, largely unredeemed; but in fact it is one of the best drained of counties, and contains within its great area many varieties of scenery and soil. Thus all round the coast line, from the Humber to the Nene, runs a broad belt of rich sea-marsh. Then there are Cliff and Wold and inland Fen, besides Clay, Carr, Heath, Warp lands, Silt sand, Oolite or limestone, and miscellaneous soils. In the course of my investigations in the county I visited and examined nearly all these districts, of which I hope to give the reader some description in the course of this chapter.

Entering Lincoln from Northamptonshire by the gate of Peterborough, we travelled to Grantham over a country that gave far views of flat, uninteresting lands, varied by occasional woods of ash and oak. At Tallington, where we passed into Lincolnshire, grass seems to predominate, only about one-third of the land being arable, while the gravel pits and the rabbits which sat about them, showed the light character of the soil. In the neighbourhood of Little Bytham the country is more undulating and better wooded, but at the time of my visit was evidently suffering much from the effects of drought, since the pastures were stunted and the



LINCOLN LONG-WOOL TUPS

wheat and barley crops poor, although the potatoes looked fairly well. At Corby barley appeared to be the prevailing crop, short and thin in 1901, although roots were a good plant. There the pastures were dotted with the famous, white-faced Lincoln sheep, whose bare legs emerge nakedly from the bag of wool above. Both in this neighbourhood and at Great Ponton, limestone comes to the surface, and the crops generally were poor. Also we noticed the number of ash timbers, the prevalent tree of Lincolnshire.

At Stoke Rochford our host was Mr. Edmund Turnor, who owns about 21,000 acres of land. It is the fashion now-a-days to gird at landlords, who are too often supposed to be mere idlers and know-nothings, living in opulence upon the fruit of other men's labours. Taking the country through, my experience is that these and kindred definitions are entirely incorrect, although, of course, there may be individuals to whom they properly apply. To such men as Sir Charles Knightley, with whom we stayed in Northamptonshire, who, as I have said, manages every acre of his great estates without even the aid of a foreman, or to Mr. Turnor, who does much the same and even keeps a cropping book of each individual field of his domains, whether it is in his own hands or in those of his tenants, emphatically they do not apply in the very least. Here I give some particulars of this property, as they are exceedingly instructive.

On the South Lincoln estate are three farms of under 100 acres, let at an average rental of 16s. 3d. the acre; eight farms of between 100 and 400 acres, let at an average of 16s. 9d.; and four farms of over 400 acres, let at an average of 18s. On the North Lincoln estate are three farms of under 100 acres, let at an average of 21s. 8d. the acre, twelve farms of between 100 and 400 acres, let at an average of 18s. 9d.; and eleven farms of over 400 acres, let at an average of 19s. 4d. Between the years 1859 and 1901 the income of the South Lincoln estate showed a reduction of 40 per cent., and of the North Lincoln estate a reduction of

42 per cent. These figures are approximately correct, but the loss may in fact be a little larger; indeed since they were first printed I have heard from Mr. Turnor that the present rent of his estates per acre, works out at a somewhat lower sum than those given above.

The capital expenditure on the buildings and drainage of these lands, exclusive of ordinary repairs and of anything spent upon mansions, amounted to the gigantic total between the years 1830 and 1893 of £155,137—sums which speak for themselves, and will make it clear to the reader how it comes about that Mr. Turnor is generally reported to be one of the best landlords in the county. What small owner could have afforded to improve his estate in similar proportion and to so liberal an extent, as has been done by Mr. Turnor and those who went before him?

In conversation Mr. Turnor said that on the whole he thought the outlook gloomy, and that we seemed to be called upon to face another crisis: in short, that after a period of comparative calm all connected with the land were in rough water again, although things in Lincolnshire were not as depressed as they seemed to be in Norfolk. The last two or three years, he thought, had been bad, and accentuated the general despondency. Particularly was this so in the case of Lincoln wool.

In 1896 this wool—that from ewes and hoggets mixed—which in the past has commanded as much as 50s. a tod fetched 24s. 8d. per tod of 28 lb. In 1897 it fetched 21s. a tod, in 1900 15s., in 1901 only 13s., a price at which it is totally unremunerative to grow. The chief cause of this lamentable shrinkage of values is, of course, the change of fashion. Formerly it seems that ladies used to prefer to wear stiffer materials, to the manufacture of which Lincoln wool is suited; but now they choose more clinging garments, made from the fleeces of the Merino sheep, which will not thrive in our colder climate. Nor does the mischief cease here, since the ruinous price of wool has

reacted upon that of the Lincoln sheep. It appears that in 1870, exclusive of merino, four million pounds of cross-bred wool was imported into this country, whereas in 1900, only thirty years later, the importations amounted to 260 million pounds, competing with the 100 million pounds of British-grown wool. Thus it comes about that whereas in 1871 Lincoln 'all-hog' wool touched 2s. 1½d a lb, in 1901 it was down to about 6d.—that is, for ewe and hog wool mixed.

As Mr. Turnor pointed out, the worst feature of the situation is that whereas in earlier years the agricultural depression was caused mainly by the drop in the price of corn aided by the effects of some bad seasons, now it has extended to stock also, and especially to sheep. For the rest, there is still a demand for farms in Lincolnshire, and especially for small farms, although the class of tenant is not so good as it used to be. The labour conditions, he said, are better in this county than in many others, and though most of the young men go away, some of them still stay upon the land.

Mr. Turnor kindly furnished me with the following interesting tables showing (1) the comparative wages of horsemen and other labour as paid upon his estate in 1851, 1878, and 1894, and (2) a return of average wages on the Panton farm, made out, I believe, in January 1900.—

Horsemen.

—	1851			1878			1894		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Head Waggoner . . .	12	0	0	25	10	0	19	0	0
Second " . . .	9	9	0	20	2	6	14	0	0
Third " . . .	8	10	0	15	0	0	11	0	0
Fourth " . . .	6	6	0	13	0	0	7	10	0
Fifth " . . .	5	5	0	12	0	0	6	10	0
TOTAL	41	10	0	85	12	6	58	0	0

Other Labour

	1851	1878	1891
Day labour	1s. 8d.	3s.	2s. 3d.
Mowing clover (per acre)	1s. 8d.	4s. to 1s. 6d.	3s.
Mowing and tying corn	6s.	7s. (tying alone)	5s. (tying alone)
Turnip hoeing . . .	3s. 6d.	5s.	1s.
Corn weeding . . .	1s. 6d.	2s. to 2s. 6d.	1s. 6d. to 3s.

Return of Wages on the Panton Farm.

	Shepherd	Garthman (or Yardman)	Waggoner	Ordinary Labourer
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Summer and winter .	2 4	2 1	2 2	2 6
Total amount received per annum about .	36 8 7	32 12 1	33 18 2	23 2 7½
<i>Piecework</i>				
Extra harvest . . .	15 0	15 0	15 0	10 15 6
Lamb money . . .	15 0	—	—	—
Journey money . . .	—	—	9 6	—
Piecework (excluding harvest)	—	—	—	14 1 1
	37 13 7	33 7 1	35 2 8	47 19 8
<i>Payments in kind</i>				
Cottage and garden .	5 0 0	5 0 0	5 0 0	—
Fuel	14 0	14 0	14 0	4 0
Potatoes	15 0	15 0	15 0	1 0 0
Allowance of food or drink	8 5 0	9 12 6	8 7 6	14 5
Straw for pigs . . .	—	—	—	8 0
TOTAL	52 7 7	49 8 7	49 19 2	50 5 8

It will be seen that in the issue the earnings of the ordinary labourer are only about £2 less than those of the shepherd, and, although he receives no house, a little higher than those of the garthman or the waggoner.

Including his beautiful park, Mr. Turnor farmed about 2,000 acres in Stoke Rochford, which may, I suppose, be said to belong to the miscellaneous section of the Lincolnshire soils, being of a heath nature, but not Heath proper.

In many of the fields the limestone comes to within a few inches of the surface, while others of them are an ugly, tenacious clay that is not of the heath character. In one or two places in this district we saw the actual junction of the clay and the limestone, and at it what is called a 'swallow hole,' that is, a kind of aperture into which the waters from the clay are drained, to vanish down the crevices of the limestone—a cheap and convenient way of being rid of them. The soil of the park varies much. Where it is low with the help of about 7 lb. of cake per diem it will fat out a bullock; but where the limestone comes to the surface it burns readily, and is nothing more than Down

On this farm the crops, with one or two exceptions, were not looking very well. Barley, of which a malting sample can be grown, is the stand-by here, but I doubt if it can have threshed out three quarters in the season of 1901. The oats, as elsewhere, were a failing crop; even Garton's Abundance, which stands the drought much better than most others, could scarcely have returned four quarters to the acre on this 'creech,' that is, light land. Mr. Turnor was one of the few farmers whom I have met who still makes ensilage. His practice is to preserve it in stacks compressed by ropes and weights, and not in pits, as used to be the more common custom, the temperature being kept as near as possible at 135 deg. Water is scarce in this country, and has to be carted to some of the fields at considerable expense.

Although the present hall of Stoke Rochford, a splendid building, was only erected between 1840 and 1845, it is the successor, I think, of two other residences that had their day before it, and contains many objects of great interest. Thus there are very good pictures of Robert Cecil, first Earl of Salisbury, by Zuccherro, and of Lord Treasurer Burleigh, and Matthew Hale, C.J., with one, by Sir Godfrey Kneller, of Diana Cecil, the wife of John Turnor, who brought these works into the family. A beautiful picture also is one by

Van der Helst, of a man and his wife and a sulky-looking girl, their daughter, I presume, whom they appear to be scolding; while over the mantel-piece in the dining-room, which is said to have been in part designed by Rubens, hangs a fine specimen of that master's work. Still more interesting are the portraits of Sir Edmund Turnor and Dame Margaret Turnor, an attractive-looking lady. That of Sir Edmund, who became, I think, owner of Stoke Rochford, is said to have been painted by a fellow prisoner in the troublous times of the Civil War. He kept a diary, which is preserved in the library, and in it I saw entered against the date of the day of his marriage, '*Una caro, unus spiritus.*'

This Sir Edmund survived his partner, and in his diary notes all the expenses of her funeral, which were large.

A still more interesting diary preserved here is the household book of Thomas Cony of Basingthorpe by Stoke Rochford, 'Merchant of the Staple' at Calais, who lived in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I. This book was found amongst the writings relating to the manor of North Stoke, purchased of William Coney, Esq., by Sir Edmund Turnor, Kt., in 1671. It contains notes of Thomas Cony's household expenses over a period of more than fifty years; rentals of lands and tenements, memos of lands purchased, profits of trade, unusual events such as the occurrence 'of the great frost,' and numbers of 'cattell and shepe' at Basingthorpe.

Perhaps the most touching entries are those headed 'the Burial of my children,' 'Buryalles—*item*,' . . . then follow the name and date of interment, and such sentences as these: 'Jesus give merce on . . . ' or 'God's blessing be with her,' or *item*, 'God's blessing and mune be with her.' Five children were buried. At the end of the list is written: 'Justie and trulie examined—19 children in all (One forgotten).'

In addition to the dwelling at Basingthorpe, where I think the diary was written, the Cony family had a house in Stoke Rochford Park. Of this nothing is now left except

the turf-covered foundation walls, which measure, according to my paces, 57 by 140 feet: outside of these are other foundations, perhaps of the garden wall, covering 42 by 120 feet. Ancient sycamores grow around the site, and in front are six terraces cut in steps down to the bank of the stream. It is strange to look on and repeople them with the dead folk who, so many generations ago, must have wandered here in their pleasure, somewhat sad also, suggesting the usual reflections, especially to one who has read the diary, of the frailness of man's tie to earth and the vanity of all mortal things. Doubtless the calm, summer sky, the rippling water beneath, and the dark, steady shadow of the trees, are identical with those with which they were familiar in this pleasant place that once was theirs. But for the rest——!

In the library of the Hall there is a splendid collection of etchings by and after Vandyck and others. Many of these once belonged to Sir Peter Lely and are stamped with a 'P.L.'

Another feature of the place is a wonderful spring that flows from the limestone rock at the head of the lakes. I think that this is the most copious spring which I ever saw in any country, being so strong indeed that it gushes forth in what may be called a waterfall. The surrounding park and country are undulating and well wooded, and altogether Stoke Rochford, although the present house lacks the charm which age alone can give, is one of the most stately and beautiful English homes that I have seen.

The first of various farmers whom Mr. Turnor took us to see was Mr. J. Woolerton, of Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth, who held 256 acres on his estate. This soil is thin, on limestone, and nearly all the land was under the plough, roots and barley being the principal crops, and sheep the stock. The rotation here on light land is roots, barley, seeds, barley; on strong lands wheat and oats taking the place of barley. The roots I noticed were a good plant and doing well, and one field of oats on some stronger land seemed very fair for the season, but the barleys I thought light, though of excellent malting

quality Mr. Woolerton, whose ancestors have held this farm for many generations, told me that although they had been badly off for labour, personally he had enough at present, and could always get it when wanted. This place, as it chanced, is interesting for more than farming, since in that grey old house, on December 25, 1642, was born and lived one of the world's greatest men, Sir Isaac Newton.

Upstairs I was shown a large low room, with ancient oak beams and plaster floor, where first he saw the light. In another room is a little partitioned space which he used as his study, when he returned from college to take up the uncongenial task of managing this manor of which he was the lord. Probably, as he is known to have been fond of carpentering, Sir Isaac made this partition with his own hands. There, too, is the little window out of which he saw the famous apple fall, and in the orchard and garden stand, not the tree itself, part of which has been made into a chair in the noble library of Stoke Rochford, but two others that have been reared from it, themselves now ancient. They are, I observed, remarkable for a peculiar habit of growth, inherited, I was told, from the parent, the trunks lying almost horizontally along the ground.

The house, being substantially built of stone, remains practically unchanged since Newton's day, and the room in which he was born is not changed at all, except as regards the furniture. It is strange to look upon it and remember, in the words of Pope, that here, when

Nature and nature's laws lay hid in night,
God said, 'Let Newton be!' and all was light.

While stopping with Mr. Turnor I saw Mr. G. William Eddie, a gentleman who has property of his own and farmed 500 acres, of which 110 were grass, of Mr. Turnor's land at Little Ponton, about two and a half miles south of Grant-ham. Mr. Eddie, who had been farming for twenty-one years, said that, although he did not think things had become any worse during the last year or two, he could not

consider the position and prospect good, as the foreigner cut out the English farmer in everything, and the return on the money invested was so small. In bad seasons, indeed, none could be made. Many of the farmers were a different class of men from what they used to be, while some belonged to the land-skimming order, and there were but few yeomen left. Also a number of the holdings were practically stocked by the Banks. Rents had fallen from 30 to 50 per cent. Thus in 1880 he paid 32*s.* an acre for a farm, and in 1896 when he left it, 14*s.* an acre only. The average was perhaps from 18*s.* to £1 the acre, but some commanded as little as 10*s.* and some as much as 28*s.* His cattle were Shorthorns, as he bred stores which he sold out at about two years old. Barley was their chief product, but in 1900 the demand for it was small. They used to make 50*s.* a quarter, but it had fallen to about 25*s.*; 30*s.* being a very good price. His rotation was—turnips which were fed off; barley; seeds which were fed, or mowed and fed; then another crop of barley with manure.

In the outlying villages labour, he said, was very scarce and many houses stood empty. The Great Northern Railway and Hornsby's engineering works at Grantham took a number of men. Partly as a result of education, the young fellows would not stop upon the land, but he hoped that people might return from the towns. In the villages near Grantham many more cottages were wanted, but in the outlying places they often stood unoccupied. Mr. Eddie's remark as to the Banks stocking farms were borne out by conversations which I had with bankers in the county. One of these gentlemen told me that 'if it were not for the Banks half the farmers would have to stop.' He added that as a class these were hard hit, and very often carried on their business by the help of borrowed capital.

In driving to Barrowby, a parish two miles west from Grantham, to visit Mr. Newton, who farmed 940 acres of land, of which about 250 were grass, after passing Cold Harbour Inn, which is said to include walls built by the

Romans, we went down a green lane along one side of which the old Roman road still runs straight as a dart. This road, which is about nine feet wide, is known as High Dyke, and is, I believe, part of Ermine Street. That it should endure to this day speaks well for the Roman system of road making. The farm lies on an extensive plateau of flat land, the arable enclosures being large, forty or fifty acres in fact, and the fences well kept. The trees are few and far between. A feature of the district is the wide green lanes by which it is intersected. The house is very good, and said to stand on the site of a monastery; a tradition to which its stone walls and curious cruciform shape give support. Set on a shoulder of the highland and facing north-west, it commands a fine view of Grantham and the surrounding country, but in winter must be somewhat wind-swept and cold.

Mr. Newton said that his stand-bys were barley, turnips, and sheep. Also he kept forty cows and reared the calves, which as bullocks were fattened out on the grass lands with the help of cake and finished off in the sheds. His cropping shift was wheat, roots, barley, seeds, but sometimes he took two crops of barley in the four years, as he could grow a quarter more per acre of that grain than of wheat. He could not, however, produce the best malting samples, although in 1900 his barleys commanded from 28s to 30s. a quarter. On the land with a sandy subsoil where twitch flourishes, the roots were, he informed me, liable to finger-and-toe. Those of his crops which I saw looked flourishing, the land being evidently very well farmed. Of roots there was a good plant, due, he said, to the fact that more showers had fallen in that neighbourhood than in most places. His sheep were Lincoln Longwools, of which he kept a flock of 500 breeding ewes, feeding in all about 1,500 on the turnips in winter.

Rents, Mr. Newton said, had fallen 30 per cent., and 40 per cent. on the strong lands. The matter, however, was not, in his opinion, one of rent, for if this had gone down, labour and costs had gone up. He began to farm in 1854, which was the best year that he could remember. Now the farmers

had little money; their capital had dwindled, with the result that work was left undone. They could, he said, just rub along by living hard and no more. The low price of wool hit the industry harder in Lincolnshire than anywhere else. He remembered selling it as high as 65s the tod of 28 lb. in 1865, and now it was down to 14s. the tod. If they could make 1s a pound on it, they might live, but 6d a pound was 'the road to ruin'. He could speak of these matters both as an owner and an occupier. Thus in 1872 he had bought a small farm which, at a rent of 43s the acre, paid him 3 per cent. on his outlay. In 1901 he let that farm at 22s the acre.

Of labour Mr. Newton said that he thought the question serious. Lads were very scarce and maids only to be procured with great difficulty. The old men were dying out fast, and those who succeeded them did not do the same amount of work for their money. If higher wages were to be paid, more work must be done, it was impossible to give larger pay for the same amount of work. Labourers were receiving 2s 6d. a day; and horsemen, who lived rent free and were allowed bacon, &c, £1 a week in money and kind. These were hired by the year and were called 'confined men,' that is, married people in regular employ. His labour came from Grantham, and its total cost was from £1 to 25s. the acre. For harvest work they had Irishmen, without whom a few years before it would have been impossible to get in the corn. On that very day over twenty of these men had applied to him for employment. The cottages were good as a whole and let at a rent of from £3 to £4, the average wage of a labourer, including harvest money, amounting to 18s 3d a week, with half a rood of potato land gratis, to which the employer carted manure. Mr Newton added that in this neighbourhood the demand for allotments was dying out, and he did not think that there was any wish for small-holdings.

At Somerby I saw Mr. J. B. Mason, who farmed 500 acres, of which 200 were grass, I think under Mr. Turnor,

to whom half the village belonged, at a rent, I understood, of about 15s. the acre. Mr. Mason relied chiefly upon sheep and barley. He kept 220 ewes, crossing Lincolns with Hampshires, and in winter about 700 in all, a few fat lambs being sold out at Easter. He said that in 1900 the barleys were not good, but in 1901 they looked more hopeful. With wheat at 30s. the quarter, mutton low, and wool 'at 11s. the tod, which money had just been offered to him, he could not consider that things were prosperous. The capital of farmers was without doubt decreasing, and of late many of them had not made their rent and a living. Still, farms had let much better during the previous four years and were in good demand at a price. He thought, however, as did other gentlemen with whom I spoke, that there would be plenty on the market after the season of 1901. For labour they were well off in that village, and did not pay their men more than about 16s. a week. Mr. Mason said that he could take no hopeful view of the local agricultural outlook. His house and buildings were, I noticed, good.

The Wold district, which we visited on leaving Stoke Rochford, is a great tract of land standing several hundred feet above the sea, and measuring, so near as I can judge, about twenty miles in length by perhaps ten or more in breadth. To the east it sinks gradually into the marsh flats, and on the west rises from the valley in which stands Market Rasen, that divides it from the district known as the Chiff. The Wold soil for the most part lies on chalk, the quality varying with its depth. In colour it is greyish, except in places where the subsoil is red chalk, when it is red also. In suitable seasons much of this land is very fertile, and some areas of it have the property of resisting drought better than most soils, perhaps because of the chalk that it contains, which seems to store up moisture.

Between Lincoln and Market Rasen the country, which is flat and uninteresting, seems to be chiefly devoted to sheep and barley that looked a thin crop in 1901. The soil is of a clay nature and hungry-looking. The oats, I noticed,

were ripening in a very uneven fashion, and could never make a good sample, while in some places the sheep seemed to be short of feed. In this district clover was the best crop. From Market Rasen to Kirmond-le-Mine, where our host, Mr. Charles Fieldsend, farmed, is a drive of about seven miles, the road thither running over Bully Hill, said to be one of the highest points in Lincolnshire, to the chalk highland or Wold country. This district of rolling uplands and vast distances reminded me of the Downs of Wiltshire, only it was more fertile in appearance.

The brothers Mr. Charles and Mr. John Fieldsend farmed between them 1,250 acres of land in a very excellent fashion, much of which has been held by their family since the time of the battle of Waterloo. Here I saw some of the best turnips that we found anywhere in Lincolnshire, a really splendid plant without a miss in it, which was the more remarkable since in this district were scores of fields where the crop had almost entirely failed that season, although it had been twice, or even three times drilled. Another surprising sight was a small enclosure of black, low-lying land, planted with mangolds, which would yield, I should say, not less than the splendid total of from forty to fifty tons per acre. It will scarcely be credited that this piece of ground had been planted with mangolds for sixteen years in succession, the crop I saw being the largest that it had ever borne.

Here is a strange commentary—almost as strange, indeed, as that of the wheat fields on Mr. Prout's farm or of the potatoes in Jersey—upon the common theory that land will not bear with any profit the same crop for a number of seasons in succession. In this instance, however, the soil had been well treated each year with ten loads of farmyard muck and 5 cwt. of Quibbel's mangold manure per acre, in addition to 2 cwt. of nitrate of soda applied in two dressings. Also at intervals of time it was dosed with gas and burnt lime.

Near to this marvellous patch of mangolds were some rich alluvial pastures, on which grazed Mr. Fieldsend's fine

herd of Lincoln Red Shorthorns and pure-bred Faneoln sheep. In these fields can be seen some very curious and ancient earth terraces, cut in the side of the hill one above the other. In the course of my late journeyings I have, as it chanced, examined somewhat similar works in Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, the former of which I have described in the chapter on that county. Mr. Fieldsend's idea, and that of the neighbourhood, seemed to be that they were piled up for purposes of defence; but this, I am sure, is erroneous, as from their site and formation they could have defended nothing. From their south-westerly aspect and other indications my belief is that here, as in Oxfordshire and elsewhere, they were devoted to the cultivation of some peculiar crop in Roman or later days, probably to that of the vine. Indeed, in the Oxfordshire case the tradition still lingers, since the field I have written of is, as I believe I said, known indifferently as Steps Meadow, from the step-like appearance of the terraces, or as Horley Vineyard.

Mr. Harry W. Chetwin, of Finsbury Park, London, writes to me as follows with reference to similar terraces seen by him in Spain, which he believes to be of Roman origin —

You mention some earth terraces cut in the side of the hill on the Lincolnshire Wolds, and suggest that they are of Roman origin, their use being for the growth of the vine. I was much struck on reading your remarks, because I have seen similar terraces on hill-sides in Spain, where they are used for growing wheat. It seems to me to be very probable that the Romans, having initiated or observed such a method of cultivating the vine in Spain, might try the same in our own island, for it may well be supposed that they would miss the southern wines to which they were no doubt accustomed. As I say, in Spain these terraces are at present used for wheat growing. I was given to understand that it is a favourite position, as 'the crops get a larger quantity of water than those growing on the level.'

Water being scarce in the Peninsula, wheat is sown much thinner than in England, and viewed from a railway carriage, a cornfield, with the earth showing between the roots of the crop, looks very poor compared with the close-sown fields of our own land.

Mr. Fieldsend's Red Shorthorn cows were square-built animals, of good substance, and his heifers, a very nice lot, seemed to be doing well. He told me, however, that his late father, a farmer of great experience, was of opinion that these Reds did not feed like the Romans, nor was their quality so good. His bull was also a Red Shorthorn, a massive beast of fine colour. He held that they would do well to look more to the milking qualities, as then they might sell down-calving heifers at a fancy price to the dairy farmers.

In fact, however, they had gone in for beef, and in that district the cow that gave six gallons of milk a day was an extraordinary animal. Here he said sheep were dipped 'early and often' in order to keep down fly and parasites. The ewes, he told me, were drafted out at a full mouth; also those that were grazed on the chalk showed a better mouth at four years old than those on the 'flint' land. Oats grown on flint, Mr. Fieldsend informed us, are often a drug on the market, owing to the fact that particles of the flint find their way into the grain, and thus into the vitals of horses fed upon it, where they set up inflammation.

An old-fashioned way of dressing sheep was to salve them by shredding up the wool and rubbing in the salve, a mixture of fat and calomel. Flocks treated thus were among the best he had ever seen and produced the most wool. He thought that if they salved they would get heavier fleeces, but this had not been done systematically for the last thirty years. Mr. Fieldsend described his land as 'useful,' but said that the turnips were a bad lay in winter for the sheep, which they were often obliged to bring up on to the grass. His practice was to get almost everything done by piecework—'to let it out' was his phrase—inclusive of weeding, hoeing, thatching, and harvesting. He told me that his men had to walk two miles to buy a pint of beer, and that often they had two thirds of the population of nearly 100 present in the church on Sunday. Whether there is any connection between these two circumstances I cannot say,

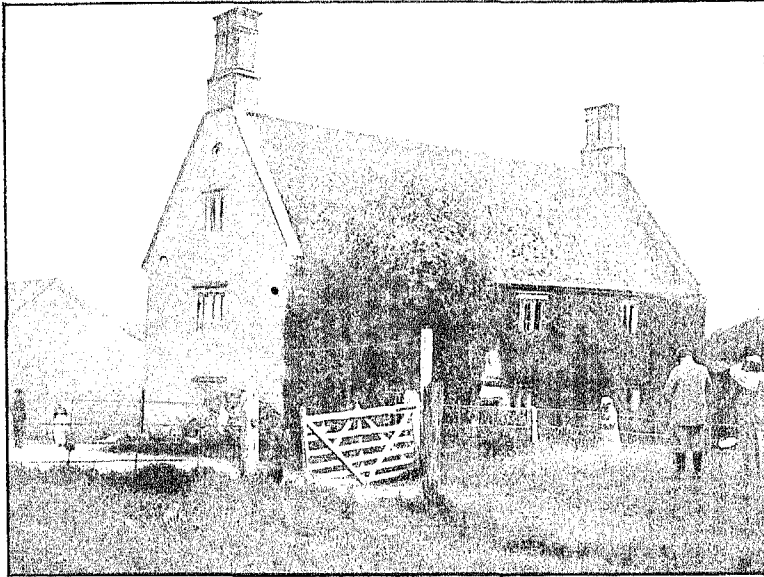
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but certainly the proportion of churchgoers in Kermond is one of which most country clergymen would be proud.

Mr. Fieldsend is a thinker as well as a life-long farmer, and his opinions struck me as being of great interest. He said that he was no grumbler, but that he could not take a hopeful view of the future, since the prices of all the farmers had to sell were down, and of all that he had to buy were up. 'I'm afraid farming is a failing industry. I would like to take a better view, but I can't.' He said that the land was not nearly so well done as it used to be in that district, and that there were only a few of the old families left to farm in the proper fashion. In short, their class was dying out. As to profits, he did not believe that the majority of farmers made 4 per cent. on their capital. I asked him how it came about, under these circumstances, that men were to be found willing to take land in Lincolnshire. His reply was, 'Because they are fools. Well, that is not a fair answer; it's because they like the life, and can do nothing else. Many a man takes a farm with borrowed capital. I can't understand who will lend him the capital. I would not.'

Mr. Fieldsend thought that the only people who were making money in the Wold district were what he called the 'monopolists,' by which he meant people with large capital who took a number of farms, not necessarily contiguous, shut up four out of five of the houses or gave them to the foremen to live in, and farmed the land as economically as possible. 'Land skimmers' also got on, but the prospects of the old-fashioned, hard-working tenant farmer were not bright. With reference to rents, he had let a farm in which he was concerned as executor at 12s. the acre. There were five applicants, but of these only one was *bona fide*. The average in his district, however, was about 15s. the acre. Of labour Mr. Fieldsend said that he had very good men on his place, but that young skilled labourers were practically unobtainable.

Here are the wages, together with their perquisites, paid



BIRTHPLACE OF SIR ISAAC NEWTON, WOOLSTHORPE

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TREE GROWN FROM CUTTING OF THAT FROM WHICH SIR ISAAC NEWTON
SAW THE APPLE FALL

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LINCOLNSHIRE

to shepherds and 'garthmen,' that is county are hired by the year from Thirteen shillings a week in money, 1 stone of bacon, fifty pecks of pe (i.e. faggots), and ten shillings for Average total value, say, 19s. a we labourers not hired by the year wer taking piecework they could earn 8 garthmen. This remuneration seem ing the times, but it did not preven 'the "£1 a week" in the towns s Mr. Fieldsend said, it is not wonderl seeing that in the country they have in towns a man may rise.

I may mention here that on anot view with Mr. E. Smith, the school this neighbourhood. He said that the had sunk 158—that is, about 15 pe census, and that many other villages v Of the children who passed through cent left Binbrooke, only the dulles These children were generally very parents liked to apprentice them to s they drifted into the towns. In his to go was increasing as a fruit of edu he said, 'They all go,' and that, a sexes returned for a holiday, they no Mr. Smith added that the tendency complete depopulation, but that whe could not conscientiously advise paren on the land.

At Binbrooke also I went over th Thomas Fieldsend, our host's brothe acres, of which 260 were grass. The were very fine and fitted with two st was a traction engine which when being thoroughly overhauled and

engineers. This machine Mr Fieldsend let out for threshing and hauling purposes. He informed me that he followed the four-course system and bred and grazed cattle and sheep, but what he chiefly relied on were sheep and barley. Of roots he had that year 120 acres, a really splendid plant for the season; of barley 120 acres, a good crop estimated to yield four and a half quarters, of wheat only twenty acres, and of oats, which were very bad, only thirty-five acres. This last grain was being much damaged by great flocks of rooks, but, as their owner said, 'if they take the lot they won't have many.'

Mr. J. T. Fieldsend's numerous sheep were pedigree Lincoln Longwools, and his cattle Red Lincolns registered in the herd-book. He said that what caused most loss among their sheep was in the spring, casting of dead lambs a month before they should be born, and in the autumn the thread-worm which came from the ground and eventually entered the animal's lungs, setting up inflammation and causing death. He had known farmers to lose half their flock from these causes. I may mention that on the following day in visiting another farm, I saw several well-grown lambs lying about, which I was told had succumbed to the thread-worm, also that in the wet season of 1902, I have had the misfortune for the first time since I farmed, to lose several lambs from the same cause on my home farm at Ditchingham.

Here the fields were large and in many places the chalk came to within eight inches of the surface soil, which in patches was of a red colour. The meadow bottoms where horses and cattle grazed were of a sandy peat and had been drained by Mr. Fieldsend's father. The turnips and swedes were exceedingly good, especially the Devonshire Greystone variety of the former, and the Peunell's Improved Purple Top swedes. Mr. Fieldsend explained that on this farm for some reason or other, although the soil was so thin, they stood drought extraordinarily well. Indeed they wanted but little rain, as in wet seasons the corn went down flat.

Mr. Fieldsend's foreman, a very intelligent man with whom I had a conversation, told me that they hired their labour by the year, an agreement, however, that so far as I could make out from him, was terminable at a month's notice by either party. He said that the young men kept going into the towns—'the young women go and the young men go after them.' Their crops, he declared, were splendid, but 'the prospect around was queer in places.' Mr. Fieldsend informed me that few gentry lived in that neighbourhood, and that there were not many farmers.

At Miss Boucherett's, of Willingham Hall, Market Rasen, I had the pleasure of an interview with Mr. Gerard J. Young, J.P., who farmed 800 acres in two holdings: one of mixed soil at Claxby, four miles north of Market Rasen, which he rented of the Earl of Yarborough, and one at Kingerby, below the Wold and five miles north-west of Market Rasen, which was his own property. Of these farms that at Claxby was one-third grass, and at Kingerby, where some had been laid down, a half was grass. At Kingerby he practised the four-course system, taking wheat after beans, and in summer grazing fifty Lincoln-red bullocks which were chiefly bred at Claxby. His sheep were not in the flock-book, but he always used pedigree rams. The lambs he sold in September. In 1900 they had fetched 32s. apiece, but in 1901 he did not expect that they would realise more than £1. His steers he grazed, but did not always finish them off. Mr. Young made a practice of lining some of his land every year, generally on the stubble, after which he grew another white crop. He said that in this way he could secure a heavy yield of barley, up to five quarters the acre. He thought that the agricultural position was not prosperous, and that men of experience were generally despondent as to the outlook.

If a farmer had no resources beyond his profession he had to live very hard and, unless he was exceptionally shrewd, was apt to find himself going the wrong way. The demand for farms was to be explained by the fact that men

liked the independent life. The holdings were sometimes split up and taken by small people such as foremen, but it had become very usual for one man to hire several farms. Unless the price of wool was going to improve he thought the prospect bad. Indeed, there was no doubt that farmers were losing capital, and for his part he saw nothing cheerful in the position. Selling values and rent of land had, he considered, fallen about 50 per cent. Labour was, Mr. Young declared, very difficult to find in 1901. He had a cottage empty and a neighbour had two. As for young men they could not be found, as they had gone away. Garthmen and shepherds were generally called 'confined men,' and were hired for the year. Remembering my conversation with Mr. Fieldsend's foreman, I asked Mr. Young if they were bound for the year or could depart at a month's notice. He replied that they were bound, but sometimes left by mutual consent. For his part, if a man was tired of him, he was tired of that man. The ordinary labourers were hired by the week.

In Miss Boucherett's park at Willingham I observed several fine oaks growing on double and treble stems from the same root. On inquiring the cause of this curious circumstance, I think from Miss Boucherett, I was informed that a former owner of the place had cut down the trees for the benefit of the king in the time of Charles I. The stubbs remained, however, and from them the present timbers had been reared by the Boucherett family.

In Ludford village I saw Mr. Ashley, a carpenter, who told me that the population had fallen about a hundred since the previous census. He said that there were fewer labourers in the place than there used to be, and that a good many houses were unoccupied. In his time also a number had been pulled down.

In driving to Lambcroft, a holding which Mr. Fieldsend was working as trustee, we passed the 900-acre Tows Grange farm of Mr. Sharpley, whom, however, I was not so fortunate as to meet. This was said to be the best farm on

the Wold, and to have a soil of more substance than most of those in the district. Certainly his crops, including the wheat, seemed to be over the average for that season, the barley, which predominated, looking especially well. Here the fields were very large, some of them measuring as much as sixty acres. In this neighbourhood, just before we came to Ludford, we passed a piece of land worked as a Wold farm which was as red in colour as that of Devonshire, though it owed its hue, I presume, not to ironstone, but to the red chalk beneath. Another farm was pointed out to me which I was told could be hired for 8s. the acre. Perhaps this may have been because it was said to have suffered from anthrax among the stock, a disease of which it is difficult to be rid.

The Lambcroft farm was situated on high land in the heart of the Wolds, all the country round being very wide and open, but slightly undulating; indeed, not at all unlike the Wiltshire Downs in its general aspect. On the day that I visited it in August, the stormy sky and rushing, boisterous winds suggested that in winter the place must be very cold and desolate. The few trees to be seen were mostly ashes, and if I remember right, many seagulls were feeding on the fields, driven inland perhaps by the bad weather.

When we saw it the farm was still in hand, but it had, I understood, been let at 19s. 6d. an acre from the following March, a spring entry being the custom here. The fields, which were large, were thickly strewn with flints. The practice is, or has been, to marl them, and the pits which have furnished the marl for generations are frequent, rounded hollows dug out to a depth of twenty or thirty feet below the surface of the land. The barleys were good and long strawed, some of the best that I had seen in the neighbourhood; and the turnips a fair plant, although they had suffered somewhat from the drought. Eight men were hoeing them in a line, rather carelessly as I thought, but Mr. Fieldsend explained that they were in a hurry to get out the worst of the weeds before harvest began. There

were no wells here, so for water the farm had to depend upon ponds and rain. In winter I was informed, all this high district is occasionally 'reeked,' or 'wuddled up' that is, rendered impassable by snowdrifts.

From Kimond to Riby, a distance of about fifteen miles, the road runs over the mid-Wold country. About the neighbourhood of Thorganby the outlook is very vast, and the land very lonely. Thus I noticed that the highway on which we drove had a strip of grass growing down its midst, showing how little it was used, and that on it we met nobody for miles and miles.

About here the turnip crop seemed to be almost a complete failure, although one great naked field had been thrice drilled. Perhaps the cause of this disaster may be the modern neglect of the old system of marling, which undoubtedly is a preventive of 'finger-and-toe' and other complaints; also in 1901, what between the drought, fly, and diamond-backed moth, roots had much to contend with. Barleys were thin but a good colour, and oats no crop at all.

Before reaching Thorganby we passed through the hamlet of Orford, where the late Mr Angerstein, a Norfolk squire with whom my father was well acquainted, and whom I remember in my boyhood, had large estates. These have come upon the market with much other property belonging to the family, and were said to have been purchased by speculators at the poor price of £15 the acre. At Thorganby, which I suppose got its title from the Norse god of that name, there were, I was informed, seven farmhouses, some of which I saw, whereof in 1901 only two were occupied by tenant farmers. The rest had become the residences of the foremen of tenants, who hold them offhand, one gentleman, who lived elsewhere, hiring three of these large holdings.

Some twenty or thirty years ago one man swallowed up three of these farms, and now another had taken over the whole three. About thirty years before the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are said to have purchased one of these farms at £60 the acre. In 1901 this same land was let at 7s. 6d.

an acre. Another fetched 9s, another 11s. the acre, while a third was vacant, no tenant being forthcoming. Yet another farm in this mid-Wold district where we stopped to change horses, belonging to the Fieldsend family, fetched 12s the acre. These prices, it may be observed, leave little or no profit to the owners.

In this district the barley seems to be tied in bundles as large as a man can stretch his arms round, which are raked together with two-pronged forks and bound with bands made from the straw. This method, it was said, saved time and stooping. A failure of the turnip crop, such as occurred in 1901, is even more disastrous than appears at first sight, since it involves, not only the actual loss of the roots, but that of the manurial value which would accrue to the land by feeding them off with sheep, and a consequent probable decrease of, say, two quarters per acre in the corn crops which follow.

At Croxby, which is part of the very extensive properties of Lord Yarborough, I left the carriage and walked to a large lake of water surrounded by sombre fir woods. It was a lonesome and lovely place tenanted only by swans floating on the lake and the swifts which wheeled over it—melancholy even in its solitude. It struck me as strange that no house should stand upon so beautifully situated and picturesque a spot, but perhaps this is to be explained by the fact that country seats seem to be rare in the neighbourhood.

Passing on through the little village of Swallow, where most of the land appeared to be light with a chalk subsoil, we came to the house of Mr. M. Addison, of Riby Grove Farm, where he had farmed a large holding for the past five-and-twenty years. Mr. Addison said that when he began life it was almost impossible to hire a farm on Lord Yarborough's estate, so great was the demand; but now on the 20,000 acres of land which lay around, in no one case had a son succeeded his father in the tenancy. Rents which used to be 35s. had fallen to 25s., and at these prices the land had been in demand and farmers succeeded to a certain extent. Indeed

two years before he would have said that there was some prospect, but this was more than he could do in 1901, which was the worst season since 1880, so bad indeed that he feared the landlords would not be paid their rents. Mr. Addison thought that the tenants who could live were the capitalists, sharp men of business who took seven or eight farms and did them well. Also men got on of the stamp of a blacksmith whom he knew, who had four working sons and lived hard, with the result that he had increased his acreage from 500 to 2,000.

Mr. Addison informed us that his land had been a rabbit warren less than a century before, and was short of water. Although he was free to farm as he liked, he followed a four-field system of roots, barley, seeds, and wheat, as he knew no better for that land. The barleys, however, were worse than on the Kirmond farms, as here the land was lighter and suffered more from drought. That district was too poor and too hilly, he considered, to allow of the success of small-holders, and even the allotments would be useless without the treading and manuring of sheep. Indeed I gathered from Mr. Addison and others, that on these light soils farming without the aid of sheep would be practically impossible, although, as he told me, the mistake is often made of keeping too many of them. Where sheep are too thick upon the land sickness of one sort or another is sure to ensue, and it is to be noticed in that part of Lincolnshire that those farmers who hold light flocks in proportion to their acreage, suffer a much smaller average loss from worm and other ailments.

For labour Mr. Addison declared they were well off, as the men lived near enough to Grimsby to know that they did better in the country than in the town. Also they had good cottages and free allotments on which to grow potatoes, that helped to keep them. He thought, however, although he was a believer in education, that boys should be trained to the land earlier than was now the case. If they began to work there at ten they would follow in the footsteps of their

fathers; but at fifteen this was not so. Mr Addison agreed with me that the case might more or less be met by summer work upon the land and winter work with books. He said that there waggoners and shepherds received up to £50 a year with privileges. The nominal wage of daymen was 2s. 9d., but for weeks his men had been earning 4s. a day at 'take' work, and when the weather was fine a man could earn up to 10s. a day in harvest. The Irish labourers were all paid by the piece, and Mr Addison said that the best of these were very good men.

At Riby, where we were the guests of Mr. Henry Dudding, the noted breeder of Shorthorn cattle and Lincoln sheep, I attended the annual sale and the luncheon which was presided over by Lord Yarborough, who owns 56,000 acres of land in North Lincolnshire. Here I found myself called upon to make a speech which was most kindly received by the large company assembled at this famous sale. In brief, I told my audience that I could not say I had found agriculture thoroughly prosperous in any part of the kingdom that I had visited, but that I was glad to find that in Lincolnshire—although the shadow of that trouble lay upon them—they were better off for labour than in many other counties. When I added that every possible expedient should be tried both by Government and private individuals to stop the fatal rush into the cities, and, although a firm believer in education, I thought that in rural districts our system might be altered so as to enable youths to get some insight into farm work in the summer months, I discovered that my audience were with me heart and soul.

At the sale which followed the prices ruled low. In 1900 the average value of fifty-five Shorthorns sold, was £63 10s., and fifty shearling rams sold, £77 17s. 6d. In 1901 the cattle averaged only £34 3s. 6d. per head, and the rams only £13 0s. 11d. a head. In 1900 one ram fetched 1,000 guineas, four others made 200 guineas apiece, and nine more from 100 to 200 guineas. In 1901 twenty-seven guineas was the highest figure touched for any sheep. The

reason of this lamentable falling-off was twofold—first, the closing of the Argentine ports in retaliation for the shutting of our ports against stock which may be infected with disease; and secondly, the tremendous drop in the price of fleeces of long-woolled sheep.

Of course it was ardently hoped and believed that the Argentine authorities would very shortly reopen their ports and allow in the Shorthorns and Lincoln sheep, which latter breed they use there to cross with the Merino. Indeed, one of the largest buyers at this sale told me that he was purchasing for that country, with the intention of holding the animals until they could be exported. I am sorry to have to add, however, that a great authority expressed to me a strong opinion that these ports would never be reopened, any more than the Australasian ports were reopened (except under strict conditions of quarantine) after they had been closed for similar reasons, a score of years or more ago.

Breeders, on the other hand, declared that the Argentine flockmasters must come to them for new blood, since, although they have the very best already, that which we send out deteriorates. My informant, on the contrary, believed that the Lincoln sheep actually improves in the climate of Argentina, which, by the way, is not the case when it is moved into any other English county, and that the importation of fresh animals is more of a fad than any thing else. I know not which view is correct, but trust sincerely that it may be that of the breeders. If not, good-bye to the profits of another English agricultural industry.

In mid-July 1902, when I was writing this passage, I gathered from a memorandum kindly furnished to me by the Board of Agriculture that there is little present prospect of the reopening of the Argentine ports. It would appear that imported live stock from Great Britain will not be admitted by the authorities there unless accompanied by a certificate from our Board of Agriculture 'certifying that the cattle plague has not existed in the whole United Kingdom during

two years previously to the date of shipment, and that the foot-and-mouth disease, horse syphilis, and sheep-pox have not existed during the last six months previous to the same date.' In practice of course this postpones the importation of British animals to the Greek Kalends, as even if the country of origin (*el pais de origen*) is interpreted by the Argentine authorities 'to refer to localities or districts,' and not to Great Britain as a whole, many years may elapse before the Board of Agriculture is in a position to issue such certificates. In a great agricultural country like Britain, some case of 'cattle plague,' whatever that may mean, is sure to occur during a period of two years. Argentina, however, may change her policy in this matter in some quick and unexpected fashion.

This ram-rearing is very expensive work, and, as it is, has proved the ruin of many. If the Argentine ports remain closed and wool keeps in the neighbourhood of its present price it can, I fear, scarcely continue to be profitable. I may add that at Lincoln Fair, which took place a day or two after my visit to Riby, the prices were, I was told, even worse than those realised at the Riby sale. Indeed, it was said that many fine animals went through the ring without finding a single bidder.

At Riby I had an interview with Mr. Robert Wood, of Messrs. Thompson and Wood, the Grimsby auctioneers and valuers. Mr. Wood said that, coming on the top of a succession of drougthy seasons, that of 1901 would be the worst harvest in money value that they had experienced for a long while. A year or two before they began to hope that they were getting on again, but now they must face another setback. Then the farmers were earning a living, but in 1900 and 1901 that was not the case, and it looked as though another crisis was upon them. Some farmers were cutting into their capital, but some who possessed sufficient resources had made a living even through the bad times. There was, Mr. Wood thought, more demand for farms than the condition of the industry warranted; indeed that for the small

occupations was quite curious. In the case of the large holdings, however, it must slacken, as the farmer had been living on hope more than on anything else. Rent had fallen heavily. Thus on a big estate in that neighbourhood which he mentioned, they used to be from 35s. to 40s. an acre, but in 1901 were certainly under £1. In the Boston, Trent Side, and Long Sutton districts, however, agriculturists were still fairly prosperous, and Mr. Wood thought that in these parts of Lincolnshire, at any rate, the condition of the industry was better than in most other places.

Was it not curious, he asked me, that in one of the most populated parts of the world and at the door of its best markets the business of food production should actually be going back? Skilled labour was, he said, very scarce, and although the worst of the labour crisis seemed to be past in Lincolnshire, the tendency among the rural population was to get away to the towns. If this went on things must become serious, as without men to do it, work could not be done. Mr. Wood said that in this part of the county big estates were the rule and the land was depopulated. He thought, however—and as I have explained *passim*, and more especially when speaking of my scheme for the establishment of an Agricultural Post, I quite agree with him—that some well-organised system of motor traction might help to bring about a better state of affairs. In a letter which I received from him subsequently Mr. Wood added these pertinent remarks:—

‘I think Government might do much more than is done at present—in lending money at a low rate of interest (say three per cent.) on easy-repayment principles for permanent improvements—such as buildings, making of roads, drainage, planting of trees, both for timber and fruit, &c.; also for redemption of tithe rent-charge and copyhold charges. I think there is money to be made out of English land yet, but it requires capital as well as science, intelligence, and enterprise to develop it. I fail to see why Government should be less generous to loyal English farmers than to dis-

loyal Irish ones, and think money should be loaned for the above-named purposes, and also to assist tenants to buy their holdings where the owner is willing to sell.'

At Riby I also saw Mr. Frank Riggall, of Croxton, where the soil is Wold land with a chalk subsoil, who with his son farmed 3,000 acres in the Lincoln, Boston, and Market Rasen districts. Mr. Riggall, who had many years' experience in husbandry, said that, although he was not going out of the business himself, he did not think the outlook any brighter than it had been. Where he lived the feeling among farmers was 'rather down,' and some of his neighbours said that they kept on losing money. Still the past six or eight years had been better than the six years that went before them. Round Boston way things looked well; indeed, he never had a better prospect than in 1901. On the Wold, however, they were very middling: there his crops were lighter than they had been for three years. Lambs were 1s. a head dearer than they had been in 1900, perhaps because it had been a bad raising year, and the stock was short. Cattle and sheep also would pay badly for summering.

On the heath land, owing to drought and no turnip crop, prospects were very poor. For his part he gave it up and was going out of it in this Heath district, as no turnips meant a loss which it was difficult to face. On the strong land near Market Rasen he never got his wheat drilled in 1901. On the Wold they had plenty of skilled men, although their cost was heavier than it used to be; but there was a difficulty in getting boys, as they went away to the towns. Mr. Riggall said that the Rating Act had been a real help to farmers, but as for remedies that would go to the root of their troubles he had nothing to suggest.

Mr. Jonas Webb, of Melton Ross, where the soil is limestone with a loam and chalk subsoil, whom I also met, said that he had been up and down England and thought, that when compared with other counties, Lincolnshire was not much worse off than most of them. The failure of the turnip crop, however, was a great blow, and the outlook

of 1901 must precipitate the agricultural troubles of the county.

Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe, a very large owner of land in Lincolnshire, who was our host at Scawby Hall, is to my mind an almost perfect representative of what a landlord ought to be. Thus, among other good deeds, he plants woods for the benefit of posterity, and, at no profit to himself, keeps a stud of about fourteen Shire mares in order to improve the breed of horses in his neighbourhood, an effort in which he has met with considerable success. Also—and this is indeed a triumph—he has succeeded in establishing, and, with the assistance of a managing committee and of the self-sacrificing hon. secretary, Mr. Spencer, in keeping in a state of comparative prosperity from the year 1894 to the present time, an agricultural Credit Society in Scawby, one of the very few which exist in England.

Most people have heard of the Raiffeisen system of agricultural banks, of which the object is to promote and foster co-operative personal credit and to advance moneys to small agriculturists, wherewith to enable them to carry on or extend their business. The underlying principle of these banks is collective guarantee; thus all the members are responsible for the default of any one of them, the basis upon which the system is built up being the established character for probity and sobriety of the individual members of each association. The success of such banks upon the Continent has been colossal. I believe that there existed in 1901 nearly 2,500 of them, and that their transactions in 1898 amounted to a total of about £11,000,000. Further, it is the boast of this foreign Raiffeisen Agricultural Banks Association, with its two thousand odd affiliated societies, that since the beginning of the enterprise in 1849, neither member nor creditor has lost a shilling by them, whereas the good they have done to struggling husbandmen can scarcely be expressed in words.

That this is the opinion of the Prussian Diet is shown

by the fact that in July 1895, a Bill was read a third time in the House of Deputies establishing a Central Co-operative Bank, of which the object is to grant loans to and receive deposits from co-operative Unions and co-operative credit Banks. To promote this end the State granted to the said bank as original capital a sum of £250,000.

When we turn to England it is, as might be expected, to find that, the matter having to do with agriculture and the welfare of the rural population, little or nothing has been done. In 1895, at the instance of Mr. Yerburch, M.P., some information was obtained from the Continent through the Foreign Office officials, and there the thing stopped. Also I believe I am right in saying that, largely through the enterprise and energy of Mr. Yerburch, the Co-operative Banks Association has been founded, but as yet, I understand, has not progressed very far. How can it, fighting against such a sea of prejudice, ignorance, and parliament ary indifference? Still it has done something. Thus according to the second annual report of the Council for the year ending July 18, 1901, it would appear that six town Banks and four agricultural Credit Societies are in active operation in England. The names of these country co-operative Societies are:—

Scawby	Agricultural Credit Society (Lincolnshire)
Hedge End	„ „ (Hampshire)
Wiggenhall	„ „ (Norfolk)
Castlemorton	„ „ (Worcestershire)

I observe, however, that no new Society has been started in the country districts since the year 1896—a fact, I regret to say, that does not indicate any rapid advance of the movement.

Our Governments can find millions and tens of millions to spend upon foreign enterprises and wars, some of which at least are of doubtful national advantage; but what amount of pressure would it take to extract from them even £250,000 to assist a scheme of this nature? That sum is about the sixteenth of the cost of, let us say, the Uganda railroad,

and Imperialist though I am, I believe truly that the benefit which must result from its judicious use in the establishment of People's Banks would prove a truer defence and advantage to this country than a dozen East African railways. Yet, as it would help not trade but agriculture and the land, what chance is there that the money will ever be forthcoming, or, indeed, any earnest and heartfelt Government assistance in this and kindred matters?

The Scawby Credit Society started with the modest capital of £200 in 1894. In 1901, when I inspected the accounts, it was quite solvent, and even boasted a reserve of £3 12s., having since its origin granted loans to the extent of £577—twenty-two in all—running from £5 to £50, the maximum allowed. During this period of activity it had suffered no losses and incurred no bad debts. To exemplify the working and usefulness of the Bank I do not know that I can do better than quote two or three specimen cases, names only being suppressed.

CASE I.—A farm labourer, an industrious man, had brought up a large family and managed to save a little money. He took half an acre, then three acres and the proverbial cow; then, when nearly sixty years of age, seized the opportunity to hire a small farm of fifty acres, which he managed to enter and stock, except with sheep. To purchase these the Scawby Society granted him a loan of £30 on his own security, consisting of his live and dead stock and corn in stack, which he insured at the instance of the society for £150. But for this loan the borrower would have been obliged to sell his sheep food to his own loss and to the damage of the farm. Having punctually discharged his debt, he applied for a fresh loan of £40, again to buy sheep, as his roots were more plentiful than in the previous season. The loan was granted on the same security as before and duly discharged. Next one of £20 was advanced, and paid off to the day. After a year the borrower saw a chance of placing his sons on a small farm, which he partially stocked

for them To do this, however, and replenish his own holding, he applied for another loan of £50, which was granted on the same security.

This chain of loans, therefore, has assisted in starting the tenants of two small-holdings, and in 1901 it was estimated that if the original borrower were to go out of farming after six years, he would be found to have quadrupled the capital with which he began.

CASE 2.—A working foreman heard of the Scawby Credit Bank and deposited with it a sum of £50. When the chance offered of taking a farm of seventy-three acres he borrowed £50 on the security of his deposit, and a further £50 on that of his stock and implements and the guarantee of two sureties. Even in the bad season of 1901 this man's farm looked well, and, as he was hard-working and knew his business, his success seemed fairly certain.

CASE 3.—A foreman in a commercial concern established himself independently in the same line of business, and locked up his small capital in manufactured goods of his own production. He was granted a loan by the Scawby Society on the security of his stock in hand and of two sureties. This loan was repaid, and a fresh one for a smaller sum advanced, which, after an extension of time, asked for on the ground that it would enable the borrower to establish himself, was duly paid. This man in 1901 had secured a connection of customers, and had a good prospect of success. But for these loans he would have been obliged to sell his first manufactured stock at a sacrifice, and must have drifted back into his old position, and thus lost the independence he coveted.

It will, I think, be admitted that the above sample instances demonstrate the utility of Co-operative People's Banks more clearly than could be accomplished by any amount of argument.

Now if these things are done in the green tree, what might not be done in the dry? The Scawby Bank, with its tiny capital of £200, has in the course of a few years

succeeded in assisting quite a number of industrious, struggling folk to advance their lives in life and attain to independence. What, then, might not happen if there were hundreds of such institutions scattered up and down the land, as is the case upon the Continent, having the strong support and sympathy of some central Authority, and engaged, each of them, in the judicious dissemination of capital among deserving folk, who mutually guarantee its repayment, that it may be used again to help others in their turn? It is said that the great Banks would be hostile to any such movement, but why should they be hostile, seeing that the business is not of the class which they would care to do, and that, being co-operative, it produces no profit except to the co-operators? On the contrary, I believe that if it were put before them in a proper light they might be glad to assist in the establishment of such Societies, since these would in due course manufacture customers for themselves, and, by increasing the wealth of the country, give them more money to handle.

The utter indifference of our Governments is, I think, much more to be feared than any hostility on the part of the large banking institutions. That these co-operative Credit Societies can be made to do good work in England as well as abroad has been demonstrated by Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe and his committee at Scawby. Possibly also the other Societies, with the details of which I am not acquainted, may be equally successful, as I have heard that they are in Ireland. Now it remains for England to follow this excellent example and thereby help to satisfy one of its most pressing needs—the multiplication and development of the desirable class of small-holders.

Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe owns property to the extent of over 8,000 acres in four different districts of Lincolnshire, but he only farms enough for the purposes of his Shire stud. Of this stud he said that he took the business up because he thought that horses were the one stock in Lincolnshire which could be improved, and because he desired to persuade farmers to consider them in the light of

productive as well as of useful animals. As a speculation, however, the venture had not been remunerative, at any rate to himself. In fact, were it not for the good that he believed his stud does in the district, he would have abandoned it long ago. The horses we inspected were, I should add, a fine lot of animals, of massive make. Especially did we admire the sires called Sea-dog and East Anglian, the latter an old horse noted for the soundness of its stock.

Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe is a great planter of woods, of which he has some 1,300 acres. He was careful to point out, however, that to be remunerative and of real value, these must be consecutively managed for two or three generations, and upon a proper system. If this is done they pay on land which is almost worthless for farming. He was of opinion, indeed, that no land that will not bring in 5s. the acre should be farmed: it ought all to be planted with larch and ash. The larch, he thought, ought not to be allowed to stand for more than thirty-five years, and the ash for not more than seventy or eighty years. On the general question of planting he pointed out that woods give employment summer and winter to men on land which otherwise would be practically derelict. Also they afford shelter, prevent wastage of rainfall, and supply farmers with hedge and net stakes, stack props, and other necessary timber.

Like many other thinking men, he believed that there is great danger of a timber famine in the near future, as the resources of the world in this respect are being grievously wasted. This is particularly the case in England, where the general poverty of landlords, and especially the pressure of death duties, are making large demands upon the existing stock of timber, owners having nothing else out of which to pay the tax. Also, from one cause and another, very little is being planted. These are opinions with which my experience in many lands leads me entirely to agree.

In speaking of the general agricultural position in Lincolnshire, Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe said that up to 1900 farmers were more hopeful, having suited themselves to the depressed

condition of things. That year, however, was bad and discouraged them, while 1901 was in some respect worse, especially as regarded the price of wool. He then hit that a clever man who attended to his work and kept his accounts made a living, as did the little farmer who with his family found all his own labour, but that the man who had not these qualities or advantages fell into failure. 'In any case,' he added, the margin was very small and most men made the most of it. As to the future he was not hopeless, looking to the fact that personally he had experienced few changes among his tenants, and that his rents, which must come from somewhere, were paid. Also he found that he could relet farms at an average fall of 30 per cent. from those obtainable in the good times.

With reference to labour, he said that in the county at large the question was not acute. Still the young men went, and in harvest time there was some scarcity, although that matter often depended to a certain extent upon the character of the employer. In districts where small-holdings existed, these had, in his opinion, a good influence on the labour question. Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe held that the extension of such small-holdings in suitable localities and under proper conditions in Lincolnshire would be advisable, and that their number ought only to be limited by the quantity of land that could profitably be put to this purpose.

This extension would be almost entirely a question of capital, and he thought that in some cases small-holdings could be created and in others helped and established by the promotion of co-operative Banks. It was very urgent that this question should be taken up seriously either by Government or otherwise. He was of opinion that regulations somewhat similar to those of the Irish Acts ought to be applied in England. In many places there was land that was not suitable to residential or other purposes, which could be put to profit by being occupied by people who were anxious to become holders.



WHEAT IN THE ISLE OF AXHOLME

Land transfer, he declared, also ought to be made cheaper and simpler. Thus he had given away two little plots to local Institutions to be used as a churchyard and the site of a reading room respectively, and the lawyer's fees and other expenses had amounted to more than the value of the land. Copyholds also should be done away with by legislation upon equitable and proper terms. Cottages, he said, were not generally short in the district, and his had plenty of accommodation. He did not think that it would do to let boys work on the land in summer and at their books in winter, but in Scawby they arranged their school holidays to fall in as much as possible with the times of the various harvests. The land, Mr. Sutton Nelthorpe stated in conclusion, ought to be in many hands—the more the better.

In the north-west corner of Lincolnshire lies a great block of low country bounded by the river Trent on the east, the extinct river Don on the north and west, and the river Idle on the south and south-west. This stretch of land, known as the Isle of Axholme, although it can no longer be called an island, is in some ways one of the most curious and interesting in England.

As the wealth of Egypt is the gift of the Nile, so the wealth of the Isle of Axholme is the gift of the Humber and the Trent. This enrichment, however, is brought about in a different way. In Egypt, as all who have travelled in that country know, the Nile overflows its banks at a certain season of the year, leaving behind it a deposit of mud to fertilise the land. In the Isle of Axholme—and the same thing happens in the case of the Ouse in Yorkshire—the floods are let onto the land to be treated (which must, of course, lie beneath the high-water level), at the rise of the tide, and at the fall of the tide withdraw themselves through the sluices, leaving behind them a deposit of the thickness and appearance of a sheet of brown paper. This process is carried on during the summer months for a period of about three years, the water entering upon the appointed land

twice in the twenty-four hours, on some ten days in each month. At the end of this, or even a longer time, the scores of individual sheets of brown mud, earned, it is suggested, up the Humber from the coast of Yorkshire and laid one upon another with beautiful evenness over the bed of poor peat, will have been found to have raised the general level of the soil to a thickness of from two to four feet.

This ingenious and interesting system is called *Warping*, and if the Warp soil be cut through and examined even many years after it has been completed, the individual layers of dry slime can be seen deposited one upon the other like those of Chinese lacquer upon a bowl. This mud or silt is chocolate in colour, friable, and easy to work, and of an almost inexhaustible richness. It might be thought that the salt brought up with the deposit by the ocean tide would prove poisonous to vegetation. In fact, however, this is not so, since after the new soil has lain a year or more to dry and be drained, it can be sown with white clover, and from that time forward will produce magnificent crops of wheat, potatoes, celery, or whatever it may be desired to grow. Some of this land, moreover, before the river was properly embanked, has in past ages been warped by nature with the overflowing of the tides.

Such land is known as 'old goings.' A small portion also—for of this we only saw one piece—which lies above the water level has actually been warped by hand, the mud being led on to it with carts at a great expense from some convenient tidal pool. This, however, was done in the palmy days of agriculture; now no one would dream of incurring such expense. The cost of the process of tidal warping, which, of course, involves an elaborate system of canals and sluices, I should add, seems to amount to about £20 or £25 per acre, and the result at the present time is to raise the land treated from a rental value of a few shillings to £2 the acre, or even more.

The subject is so interesting and important that, with

due acknowledgments, I supplement my remarks upon it by quoting the best and clearest account of Warping and Warp land which I have yet seen. It is extracted from the 1901 catalogue of barley, oats, and seed potatoes issued by the well-known grower Mr. Scholey, of Goole. Mr. Scholey says :—

Where Warp is at command, there is no method of raising low-lying and worthless lands that is so convenient and effective as warping. The river Humber is the great reservoir from whence this apparently inexhaustible supply is obtained. The water of this broad and voluminous estuary is profusely and uniformly mixed with a peculiar kind of yellowish mud called warp. Some geologists regard this deposit as the waste of the diluvial till of the Holderness coast. Others consider it to be the river silt ' churned ' up and turned back by the tides of the Humber.

The Humber drains the most of Yorkshire and much of several other counties, and receives incalculable quantities of the soil of these counties from its tributaries in a state of suspension, which by the action of the tides is thoroughly mixed and deposited at the bottom and sides, and also in large sand banks in various parts of the vast area of this river. This compound the Humber, by the force of its tides, conveys and reconveys to the lower portion of the Trent and Ouse, and also to the tributaries of the latter, from which thousands of acres of low and in many instances quite worthless land, lying on the borders or inland, at distances varying from one to seven miles, have been covered one, two, and even three feet thick with Warp and converted into land of average quality and fertility; and yet, notwithstanding the fact that several thousand acres of such land have been made, requiring millions upon millions of tons of this deposit in its creation, the waters of these rivers are to all appearance as fully surcharged therewith as they ever were. This no doubt must be attributed solely to natural causes, such, most probably, as are set forth in one or both of the theories above referred to.

The soil most frequently improved by warping is peat; but any inferior land being contiguous to any of the above-named rivers, and lying sufficiently low to admit of its being flooded to a depth of two to four feet, may be raised and greatly improved by the process. In order to carry out these improvements three things are necessary. First, that the land to be improved shall be situate within a practical distance from one of the rivers

above referred to, secondly, a sluice at the river, to open and shut so as to take in the tides or keep them out at pleasure, and thirdly, a canal or 'warping drain' to convey the water to and from the land to be warped.

The size of a warping sluice varies from six or eight feet square to twice these dimensions, and the width of the canal from thirty feet upwards. The largest sluice and canal ever made for this purpose is the one by which the principal part of this immediate neighbourhood was warped, the former having two openings, each sixteen feet wide by twenty deep, through which numbers of vessels of nearly one hundred tons burthen have passed, bringing cargoes of manure from Hull, London, and elsewhere, and taking out a return cargo of potatoes for the London and other markets. This canal is nearly one hundred feet in width, and is continued for a distance of about seven or eight miles, warping, and thereby converting bad land (chiefly peat) into good, on both sides its course.

When the land to be warped is not under cultivation, the necessary preparations may be made at any time, but when the reverse is the case it is of course needful to defer the work until after harvest, when the land is surrounded by an embankment varying in height from three to six feet, according to circumstances, the internal canals or inlets cut, &c. The area to be warped may vary from thirty to forty acres (a very primitive method) to three or four hundred, according to the size of the sluice and canal. All the necessary preparations having been completed, the doors of the sluice are thrown wide open at low water to the full force of the rising tide, which is conducted by the canal to the land to be warped.

When Warp is in the rivers or warping canals it is impossible to distinguish its various constituents one from another, but as soon as the tide has reached the land and begun to spread itself over a larger area, the force of the current is very considerably weakened, and the *heavier* particles begin at once to fall to the ground; and whilst the *medium* are carried somewhat further, the *lightest* float to the more remote portions of the enclosure. One of the peculiarities of Warp is that those *particles* which when in the water are *heaviest* make the *lightest* and most *friable* land, and *vice versa*. Hence it is highly necessary, when the water has reached the land, that a portion of it be confined in smaller inlets or canals, and thereby conducted to the various parts of the enclosure, before being allowed to expand over the

entire area, by which means the Warp is more evenly distributed and a more uniform quality of land is the permanent result

Another peculiar characteristic is that although it produces grain of excellent quality, yet it is somewhat varied in colour. Especially is this the case with all wheats, and gives, even to my own, which is all the produce of carefully selected parent ears, the appearance of being of two kinds—the lighter Warp producing the brightest, and the heavier the darkest-coloured grain, but this dissimilarity in colour at once disappears when grown on other soils

The length of time required for warping a piece of land depends on several circumstances, viz the thickness of Warp it is necessary to lay on in order to raise the land sufficiently high to drain well in times of heavy and continuous rainfall, the distance the land lies from the nearest available supply, the state of the weather—dry seasons being much the best, the tides then containing a much larger percentage of Warp than in wet ones—the area inclosed, and the capacity of the sluice and canal. The average duration of the process may be put down at from two to three years. In the spring and summer there is a larger proportion of Warp in the water than in the winter, in consequence of the rainfall being usually much less in these seasons of the year. The flood tides—at the new and full moon—both in summer and winter contain a far larger quantity of this deposit than the ‘neap,’ owing to the much greater volume of water that *then* comes up from the sea, the violence of which stirs up the Warp that during the neap tides had partially settled to the bottom of the Humber. The work is performed at one or two operations, according to circumstances, the second warping taking place after an interval of from five to ten years. The double process invariably makes the best finish of the land, but it is a great inconvenience to the occupier to lose the use of the land twice, to say nothing of the many heavy expenses that fall on him each time the land is given up to him by the warpers, and has to be again divided into fields, old ditches reopened, or new ones cut, the land drained and put under a proper course of cultivation.

Although Warp land will not grow wheat or other cereals of more than about ordinary quality, yet as a ‘change’ of seed for all other soils it stands *unsurpassed* if not unequalled

At Althorpe Station, by which we arrived in the Isle after crossing the broad stream of the Trent, the traveller

could see at once that here agriculture was a matter of care and moment. Confronting him was a board encompassing the site of the Lindsey county Council experimental plots, and in a field beyond were the plots themselves. Here we saw growing twenty strips of different sorts of potatoes, the staple of the Isle, and others of oats and wheat. Each plot, at any rate of the potatoes, had been divided into fifteen sections, and, except the fifteenth, treated with as many different kinds of manure. The fertiliser which had been found to answer best, by the way, was also the heaviest that had been applied—viz a dressing of 24 cwt. of nitrate of soda and six of superphosphate to the acre.

Our guides in the Isle of Axholme were Mr Sutton Nelthorpe, of Scawby Hall, Mr. T. J. Blaydes, J.P., of Epworth; and Mr. J. Stephenson, of Althorpe, in whose company we made a journey of sixty miles around the Isle. The Isle of Axholme is one of the few places I have visited in England which may be called, at any rate in my opinion, truly prosperous in the agricultural sense, the low price of produce notwithstanding, chiefly because of its assiduous cultivation of the potato. Also, as in the case of the Marsh lands, which we saw subsequently, it has benefited much from the recent dry seasons that have brought disaster to many parts of England. On those deep saline soils our poison is their meat.

Of course values and rents have fallen since the good times; thus a farm of 200 acres which thirty years ago was let at £5 the acre in 1901 fetched, I believe, under £3, about the top rent in these days; and land which used to sell at perhaps £100 the acre has come down in proportion. But it still both sells and lets readily; indeed, the smallholders take up all that can be had, if it be of the right quality. It must be understood, however, that those who bought at top prices in the good times, especially little men who mortgaged their freeholds, have been very hard hit, so hard that in some cases they have vanished beneath the

combined burden of interest and low values, and been replaced by others.

No country gentlemen seem to live in the district, and, as is generally the case where small-holdings are numerous, I heard few complaints about labour, although one old farmer whom I met was very indignant because on the previous day his men had asked to be supplied with afternoon tea! The average wages appeared to be 2s. 9d. a day for day men, 18s. a week for horsemen, and 16s. a week, with cottage, for garthmen. Men living in the house with foremen or owners receive about £24 per annum and food, and horsemen £30 per annum and food. The rental of the larger farms of good land might be put at an average of 35s. an acre—it used to be almost double—but the smaller holdings fetched much more.

On all the Warp lands and some others the crops looked splendid in 1901, especially the wheat and potatoes, of which the favourite sorts were the 'Up-to-date,' 'British Queen,' and 'Selected Giant' varieties. These last have the peculiarity of bearing no flowers.

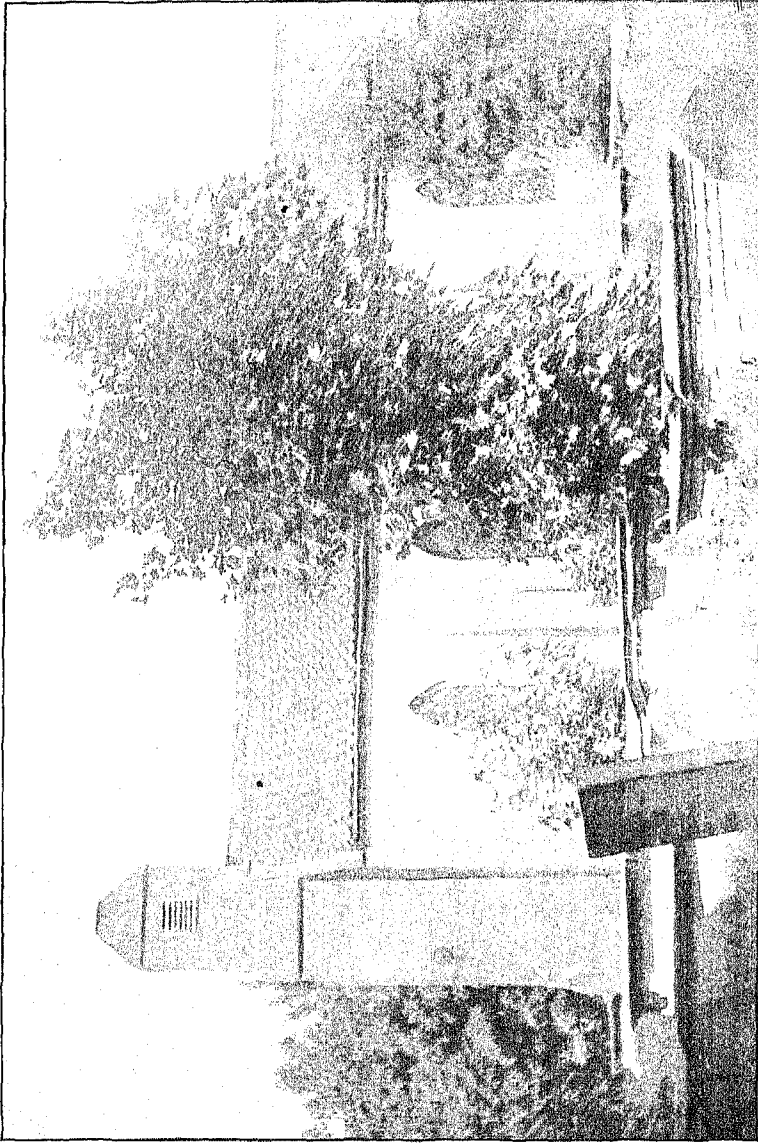
Our route on this great round, which we accomplished by the help of relays of horses, was from Althorpe, across the Stainforth and Keadby Canal, and the Paupers' Drain, so called, I believe, because it was cut by paupers, to Garthorpe, in the extreme north-west corner of Lincolnshire. All along the sides of the roadways which we followed ran a little stone pavement still known as the King's Causeway. These causeways were here before the roads, and used by the old inhabitants and their pack animals in crossing the dismal swamp. In Cyprus I have seen somewhat similar pathways, said to have been built by the Romans and Venetians. In the neighbourhood of Adlingfleet we crossed the old Don River, in the bed of which an orchard was growing, bearing the best crop of apples which I saw that year, and entered the Marshland district of Yorkshire. Here we came to stiff clay lands and a commonage carrying cattle.

This soil must be worked by three horses or a steam

plough, and was worth no more than 12s. an acre. Further on, however, it improves, and where the pasture has never been broken, and grows on naturally warped 'old going land,' it brought in 50s an acre. Beyond, on a vast plain, covered with bounteous crops, but almost unmarked by trees or churches, stands the straggling village of Swinefleet, which has a population of about 1,200 souls. The church is a brick, barn-like building, of extraordinary ugliness, with a rough, tiled roof and a neglected graveyard full of large, flat tombstones. In this church John Wesley preached till it was found too small for his audience, after which he delivered his sermons beneath some elm trees which grow on the farm of a gentleman whom we met. I asked an inhabitant why the church was in such bad order. He replied, 'Oh, there is no squire in the place.'

Near Swinefleet we saw the mud-coloured Ouse, that at this spot may be 500 yards in width, creeping on towards the Humber and the sea. Next we came to a cutting on the then unfinished Goolc and Marshland Light Railway, which, with another line, will, it is expected, prove a great benefit to the neighbourhood. Here, nigh to Reedness Junction, the navvies had made a large excavation, in which I saw the roots and stumps of scores of pine trees, apparently Scotch firs, together with some of their trunks, all of which have fallen in a south-easterly direction. I regret that I have no space to dwell upon the subject of this buried forest. There are various theories as to when it grew and how it came to be destroyed. Some say that the Romans burnt it, but personally I do not agree with them. I believe that the trees were killed by a subsidence of the soil or a change of climate, the roots standing in water till they rotted, and the trees being blown down by the prevailing wind. Yew trees are also found which the inhabitants of the Isle call briar-thorns: they use their twisted roots in garden rockeries.

Recrossing the bed of the Don, and leaving Thorne Moor and its peat-moss litter works on our right, we came to



SWINEFLEET CHURCH

Crowle, Belton, and Epworth, the capital of the Isle, where we saw the parsonage in which Wesley was born, and the window through which he was rescued from the fire as a child, by one man standing upon the shoulders of another, or so says the local tradition. This is the principal home of the small-holders, who, as Mr. J. Standring, a great authority, satisfied me by facts and figures, are, on the whole, very prosperous, and not nearly so heavily mortgaged as is generally supposed. The circumstances of this parish and its population, which, he said, applied equally to the neighbouring villages of Haxey, Belton, and Owston Ferry, as they were furnished to me by him, and confirmed by others, are as follows.

The area of Epworth is 5,741 acres, the rateable value £6,920, and the number of ratepayers about 500. The land is held thus:—

Over 200 acres	.	.	.	.	.	2 occupiers
„ 100 „ and under 200 acres	.	.	.	.	.	12 „
„ 50 „ „ 100 „	.	.	.	.	.	14 „
„ 20 „ „ 50 „	.	.	.	.	.	31 „
„ 10 „ „ 20 „	.	.	.	.	.	40 „
„ 2 „ „ 10 „	.	.	.	.	.	115 „
„ $\frac{1}{2}$ acre „ 2 „	.	.	.	.	.	80 „

The parish contains several hundred acres of unenclosed land, divided into scores of separate freeholds and copyholds, cut into strips of from one rood to two acres in size. Owing to the deaths or removals of owners or occupiers, some of these lots are constantly coming into the market for hire or purchase, and thus afford great facilities to poor men who wish to acquire small-holdings of either class.

Some years ago, when giving evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons, Mr. Standring called together fifteen labourers, renting about one and a half acres each, in order to ascertain by their direct statements the advantages, if any, that they had derived from their holdings. One and all of these men were loud in their praise of a system that had made it possible for them to face a long winter without

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fear of hunger, or of having to apply for parish relief. They said that since they held a piece of land they had grown wheat, barley, and potatoes, which furnished them with bread, bacon, and vegetables for the year. This they felt to be a great boon. Mr. Standring told me that he had been acquainted with these men for years, and was quite certain that not one of them has had to seek parochial assistance; also that they were in a far better position than others of their stamp who did not own or hire land.

The class above these, who hold from 2 to 150 acres, he declared, almost without exception, have risen from beginnings as small as those already described. For instance, the nine men quoted below, who farmed from 30 to 150 acres, were well known to him, and in early life had all occupied the position of farm servants.

No. 1	.	.	200 acres	No. 6	.	.	60 acres
„ 2	.	.	150 „	„ 7	.	.	50 „
„ 3	.	.	120 „	„ 8	.	.	50 „
„ 4	.	.	100 „	„ 9	.	.	40 „
„ 5	.	.	100 „				

These men all lived in Epworth and were prosperous. Some of them also were giving their sons a start in life which would enable them to attain positions of equal advantage.

Mr. Standring informed me that the small-holders grow more grain than do the large farmers, at least an equal quantity of beef, more vegetables and pork, but less mutton, small-holdings not being adapted for sheep-walks. He also furnished me with the following table and note descriptive of fourteen specimen Epworth farms, which is well worth the study of those who are opposed to small-holdings.

No. 1.	12 acres	.	.	.	Horse, cow, and pigs
„ 2.	50 „	.	.	.	3 horses, cows, and pigs
„ 3.	5 „	.	.	.	Cow and pigs
„ 4.	25 „	.	.	.	2 horses, cows, and pigs
„ 5.	25 „	.	.	.	2 „ „ „
„ 6.	25 „	.	.	.	2 „ „ „

No	7	30 acres	.	.	.	2 horses, cows, and pigs
"	8.	25 "	"	.	.	2 " " "
"	9	30 "	.	.	.	2 " " "
"	10	80 "	.	.	.	3 " " "
"	11	100 "	.	.	.	5 " " "
"	12.	180 "	.	.	.	10 " 12 cows, and pigs
"	13.	20 "	.	.	.	2 " 1 cow, and pigs
"	14.	90 "	.	.	.	3 " cows, and pigs

All these men, and their fathers before them, have been labourers in early life. I believe that not one of them wished to leave the land for town life. One and all commenced with at most a few acres—in many of the cases not more than one or two—and have added to their holdings or changed them for larger ones—sometimes more than once. They are their own employers and consequently feel independent.

Mr Pringle reported a few years ago that the Isle of Axholme was in a state of insolvency—mortgaged up to the value—and often more. That, Mr. Standring said, was true in isolated cases, but incorrect as a whole. There are instances in which property was bought from thirty to fifty years ago, and two thirds of the purchase money borrowed on mortgage, where the purchaser would lose the whole of his capital if it were now put on the market. But such cases are very few, as a large proportion of these mortgages have long been cleared, and in many examples subsequent purchases made and again cleared by the same men. In his opinion it would be a great boon if the small-holding system could be extended throughout England.

From Epworth we drove to the Wroot drain pumping engine, which was kindly set to work for our instruction. It was a wonderful sight to see it sucking up the water at the rate, I think, of 300 tons a minute, and delivering it into the pool beyond the dam, which instantly began to swell and overflow, as I have seen the great Geyser basins swell in Iceland before the columns of water spout from their surface. From the pumping works we journeyed to Paik-drain siding, where we were shown new-warped land already bearing

splendid crops, and other lands in the process of warping. Here also we saw celery being grown for market, and heard of the risks and profits of that very uncertain crop from the lips of a grower. Celery, he said, might realise £70 an acre, but plenty of it was sold at £30. In addition to that of the rent and rates, he put the cost of its cultivation per acre at £16 for manure, £6 for hand labour, and £4 for 20,000 plants for setting, or £26 in all. If the produce only brought in £30 it is obvious therefore, that the profit would be nil, whereas a £70 crop must pay handsomely. The risk, my informant added, was great, especially that of frost and from wet which runs into the heart of the crowns and rots them. In that district as much as seventy acres had, he said, been lost thus in a season.

In this neighbourhood some land was pointed out to me belonging, I understood, to Mr. Bletcher, which was said to have been bought for £12 an acre. The buried trees, of which it was full, were then taken out of it at a cost of £10 the acre, in order to allow of the growth of celery, which requires deep culture and a great quantity of manure mixed with the peat. The results as I saw them in 1901 were very striking, the crops being as good as any in the district. Near by, too, I saw warped and unwarped land lying side by side. The contrast between the appearance and fertility of the two was wonderful; also the warped land had been raised nearly four feet above the level of the other soil by the layers of silt deposited. Before warping it was said to have been worth 8s. an acre, after that process and the erection of the necessary buildings, 40s.—figures which tell their own tale.

Returning to Epworth, we passed hundreds of acres of small-holdings, long bands of various-coloured crops lining the plain and the slopes of hills, all aglow with the rich light of evening. These plots are called 'selons' in legal phrase, or, more commonly, 'strips' or 'lands.' Their appearance and method of tenure go far to confirm the theory, that before the soil of England was gathered into

few hands, the 'stetches,' of which so many thousands may still be seen gone down to pasture all over the heavy lands of England, that measure perhaps a score of yards in width and run the whole length of a field, were very frequently the separate property of individual yeomen.

Afterwards we examined some of the great sluice-gates that hold out the waters of the Trent from the irrigation drains, or, if need be, let them in, which are so beautifully balanced that a child can move them. Thus at length we came back at the fall of night to Althorpe, where we bade farewell to the prosperous and bountiful Isle of Axholme and to our kind conductors.

In the Isle of Axholme I saw Mr. William Standring, F.A.I., auctioneer and estate agent. Mr. W. Standring said that the district was prosperous, as the river Trent brought life to this country. The selling value of land varied in accordance with its quality from £20 up to £100 an acre; not long before he had sold some at Goole at £90 the acre. The rentals ran from 10s to £3 the acre, odd bits fetching as much as £4. There had, however, been a drop in these values. Thus a farm of 200 acres with which he was acquainted, used to let thirty years before at £5 the acre. In 1901 it would fetch about £3. The occupiers of that date had vanished and their places were taken by successful small-holders. Indeed all who had bought at high figures in the good times were now hard hit by the continuous fall in the value of produce, and in many cases their properties had fallen into the hands of the mortgagee. The small-holdings, however, were not now mortgaged to excess, and the small-holders were prosperous but not increasing rapidly in number, although the village traders were purchasing land. Also the tendency was for these small-holders to take more land and become large holders. Ninety per cent. of these men were good farmers. Fruit and grass lands were neglected; also they kept few cattle and no sheep, relying on potatoes, wheat, oats, seeds, and turnips. They practised a five-course shift: seeds,

turnips, potatoes, wheat, barley, or seeds again. The wheat crop in the Isle averaged seven quarters an acre; the oats nine or ten quarters; the clover-hay, which grew luxuriantly, two to three tons an acre, and the roots were splendid.

That Mr. William Standing did not exaggerate the capacities of the Isle in 1901 I can testify, as the crops I saw there were wonderfully fine throughout, especially the potatoes, which are perhaps its mainstay.

Mr. W. Halkom, whom I saw upon the Yorkshire border, had, I was told, risen from small beginnings to a high position in the farming world. He told me that without potatoes they could not live in that neighbourhood, especially as the fine crop of wheat which followed them ought to be taken into account. The manure given to potatoes was twenty loads of dung, 6 cwt. of superphosphates, and 4 cwt. of nitrates per acre, costing in all about £7. He considered six tons of saleable tubers a good crop per acre, but of course such a return was only obtainable in suitable seasons, as if wet and disease set in they might not harvest more than one ton per acre. Mr. Halkom sprayed with sulphate of copper as a preventive against disease, and was very careful to keep the different sorts of potatoes true. Thus when I went through his farm, men were going up and down the long ridges and removing from a field of the variety known as Giants any plants which the flower, or the hue of the haulm, showed to be of alien parentage.

Mr. Halkom told me that in 1901 there was a keener competition for the purchase of farms than there had been, and that he considered the condition of the industry to be more prosperous than it was.

Mr. E. Hardy, of Swinefleet, which is over the Yorkshire border, who accompanied us upon some part of our journey, told me that the 'old going' land through which we were passing at the time, that is, as I have explained, land which has been naturally warped, lays down very well to grass. This, to judge from the pastures which I saw

upon it, I can well believe to be the case. These let, Mr Hardy informed me, at about 50s. an acre. The labourer he said, take 3s. a day in that district, also the women would come out in the fields, where they could earn fifteen pence a day, and in potato-time eighteenpence a day. They were well off for labour in the Swinefleet district, and they had plenty of Irish hands, men of very fine physique.

Mr Thomas Raper, of the Manor Farm, Wroot, celery grower, informed me that the business, which he has followed for twelve years, was comparatively a new one. In 1900 he had twenty acres and did well; in 1901 fifteen acres; but many plants had died and he did not expect a good return. Celery was an uncertain crop: he had had it drowned and he had had it frozen off in very sharp weather, but the cultivation of this root was increasing and the consumption seemed to be constant. At a price of 6d. a dozen sticks it paid. Labour, Mr. Raper said, was better to deal with than it had been, but almost too dear. The standard wage was 18s. to £1, foremen taking 25s. a week with privileges, which included a cow and its keep. Although they could earn £1 a week the young men were going away, being tempted to the towns by the prospect of shorter hours and more pleasure, but not so fast as they used to do. Mr Raper put the total cost of celery culture at £25 per acre.

Mr. Blaydes, of Epworth, whose farm we saw, held 500 acres, his staple crops being potatoes—of which he had no less than 160 acres—cauliflower, and celery. Of corn he grew sufficient only to furnish him with straw. Mr. Blaydes made a speciality of the cultivation of seed potatoes, not only of the old standard varieties imported from Scotland, but of new sorts, such as the 'Charles Fidler' from Central Europe. He said that since the day of the old Magnum Bonums he had introduced all the best potatoes into the district, and that in 1901 he was growing thirty-five different varieties. For labour, he informed me, they were fairly well off, the question not being acute in the Isle, but the men liked to do as little work for as much money as they could get. The

district was, he declared, prosperous: in it there was nothing that approached to distress. Although he did not consider that there was room for any great local development in the market-gardening industry, he was a believer in small-holdings. Indeed he considered the question one of national importance, and that Government ought to come forward to help to keep people on the land by promoting the creation of such holdings, wherever this was possible, by advancing money under proper conditions and guarantees to fit persons desirous of purchasing land.

Mr. W. C. Brown, of Appleby, whom I saw also, told me that the rents in the Isle averaged from £2 to £2 10s per acre. They were down very much, as the Warp-land used to command £4 or £5 an acre, but had been steady for the last few years. Mr Brown himself farmed from 800 to 900 acres at Appleby, seven miles north-west of Brigg, where the soil is loam and gravelly, and there is much ironstone. Potato growing and milk were his staples, the former being sold in Manchester and London, and the latter, of which he produced 100 gallons a day, in Grimsby and Scunthorpe. He considered that milk production was more profitable than raising beef. When I asked him of the condition of the farming industry in his locality he answered, 'I'm afraid a number are not doing well; I'm afraid I'm losing my friends.' As to labour he said that the ironworks took away their young men, and that there was scarcely a labourer's son who stayed upon the land unless he was 'half silly.' I think it was he who pointed out to me some big ironworks which we passed, and as an instance of the inequality of our rating system, remarked that they earned a larger income than all the agricultural district which lay around them and yet paid practically nothing to the rates. Similar instances are to be found throughout the length and breadth of England, and this unequal distribution of financial burdens is undoubtedly one of the most substantial grievances of which the land and all connected with it have to complain.

The Rev. Mr. Graves, the Rector of Epworth, whom I

met there, informed me that the majority of the holdins were small and the large holdings had become less and fewer. Most of the small-holders had, he said, been labourers themselves, although in a few cases their fathers and in still fewer their grandfathers, occupied that position in life. The families of the small-holders were all workers and except at a pinch in harvest or thrashing, they employed no outside labour. For the most part they lived on the produce of the land, the surplus that they sold providing them with clothing and other necessities. The custom was for a man to begin by hiring one 'land,' working at the same time as a labourer for someone else, then by degrees to acquire a second, a third, and a horse and cart. To do this, however, that man must be careful, as it involved a struggle. What he noticed was the general want of money. Owing to this lack when a small-holder bought land he did so on the town Building-Society principle, only the capital was not repaid by fixed instalments and often remained as a permanent mortgage on the land. The money was generally borrowed from solicitors at about five per cent. interest. Mr Greaves added that the people were, as a whole, very fairly successful.

About Southrey on the way from Lincoln to Boston the fields are flat and wide, the woods small and sparse, the fences low, and the soil red-brown. Here on August the harvest was general, oats being the predominant crop. The line we travelled on runs parallel to a canal which has a roadway made upon the crest of its high bank. Around Stixwould the hedgerow timber grows scanty, but here there is a large wood. In the neighbourhood of Kirstall pollard willows dot the flats, and sheep were feeding on the fields. Potatoes were grown also, but these did not compare with those we saw in the Isle of Axholme. After the samples there also, the oats looked dull in colour and the barleys thin, while round Tattershall the general appearance of the crops was disappointing. At Dogdyke hay was still

in the swathe. Here there was a good deal of grass, but apparently not much stock, except a single herd of Red Shorthorn stores grazing in the pastures. Also there were some fruit trees laden with apples, a few elms, ashes, and rows of pollard poplars, that served to mark the vast expanse of level land which was broken occasionally by small clustered villages and bridges of red brick. About Langrick there was much more stock upon the grass, and the timber trees were larger, and so things continued along the banks of the Witham up to Boston.

In all my travels I remember no scene more beautiful in its own way than that of the approach to Boston upon this August evening, although its general effect was Dutch rather than English in character: The wide flats, the gleam of water in the river and canals, the beautiful tower of St Botolph's, so majestic yet so light and exquisite to the eye, better known as Boston Stump; the roofs of the rare villages, the varying greens and golds of crops, and then, dominating and flooding all with its lurid rays, the glorious, red orb of the sun appearing between two dense curtains of black cloud and resting upon the horizon's edge. Although it is almost impossible to describe, the scene was not one to be forgotten by an observer of natural effects.

All down the coast of Lincolnshire, from the Humber to the Wash, lies a fringe of marshlands, many of which have been won from the sea during the last eighteen centuries by the toil and ingenuity of man. At Wainfleet, whither we arrived after a long railway journey from Scawby, in the north of the county, to stay for several days with Mr. Tindall, one of the most experienced and respected managers of estates in Lincolnshire, we had an excellent opportunity of studying these marshes and their agricultural conditions.

All along the coast southwards runs a road made upon an artificial ridge of earth, which ridge traverses the country known as 'Tofts,' passing at short distances a series of splendid churches that testify to the importance of that district during the Middle Ages. This roadway is, in fact, a

bank thrown up by the Romans, shortly after the time of Christ, to enclose a rich stretch of salt marsh over which the tides then ebbed and flowed, and very likely to serve the additional purpose of a military path

The Romans disappeared, the country fell into disorder, and became the harrying ground of invaders, the dammed-up rivers burst their banks and flooded the reclaimed lands, so that the area which had once been the prey to salt water now became the prey of fresh, and from marsh was turned to fen. This at least is my theory, since otherwise it seems difficult to account for the fact that although both of them have once been beneath the sea, the soil to the west of the Roman bank is much heavier than that to the east. If, however, it has lain for centuries in the condition of a fresh water swamp and then been redrained, say within the last 200 or 300 years, as I believe to be the case, the mystery becomes easy of explanation.

Beyond this Roman bank, at a distance of a mile or so seawards, is another bank which was raised during the Napoleonic wars, thereby reclaiming from the sea one of the most fertile tracts of land in England. On the calm summer afternoon upon which I saw it the view from this outer embankment was very striking

Westward, to the foot of the South Lincolnshire Wolds, some ten miles away, stretched the great plain covered, in 1901, with splendid crops, its distances broken by occasional windmills, a few farmhouses and stacks, and here and there, some groves of trees. Turning to the east we saw a vast mud-flat, emerald green with the growth of samphire and marsh grasses, stretching down to the sea some miles away; its shore marked only by the long lines of snowy-plumaged gulls standing at the edge of the water.

Here, from Gibraltar Point, almost as far as Boston, it would be very easy to repeat the operation undertaken by the Romans, and again by the marsh-dwellers at the beginning of the last century, and by throwing up another bank a mile or more seaward, to reclaim a third breadth of splendid

land capable of producing very heavy crops. At the present prices of agricultural produce, however, there is little likelihood that this will be done, although the cost of enclosure, it is estimated, would not amount to more than £10 the acre. From our point of vantage on the bank looking over the mud-flats and the breadth of the Wash—here about sixteen miles in width—we could see the water tower of the King's estate at Sandringham, in Norfolk; and to the east the hill of Hunstanton, almost opposite to Gibraltar Point, and near by it the low, dim flat of Heacham beach.

If the Isle of Axholme is the most prosperous place that I had hitherto found in England, it is certain that the arable marshlands round Wainfleet run it hard. Rarely have I seen such crops of corn, such cuts of clover, such growth of mustard seed, or such plants of roots. Nothing can suit this cool, deep, saline soil better than continual drought. Thus, in the season of 1901—one of the most disastrous, perhaps, taking the country through, that England has had to face since 1879—the Marshland looked its very best. In a wet year, however, such as that of 1902, its aspect is very different, for then the heavy crops are difficult to reap, of a poor sample, and go down—to such an extent indeed that I am informed they appear sometimes as though a steam roller had passed across them. Also the potatoes—here, as in the Isle of Axholme, a great staple—suffer from disease, and become almost worthless. But in the autumn of 1901 the marsh farmers had to fear no such misfortune, and even at the prevailing prices could, in most instances, afford to face the future with a smile. A correspondent writing to me from this district in the autumn of 1902, informs me, I may add, that its husbandmen ‘no longer smile.’ Such is the mutability of agricultural affairs.

I must explain, however, that I am speaking of the arable farmers. Taking the marshes through, that is, those to the north-east of Wainfleet, towards Alford, and Louth, a very large proportion of them are under grass, and, there,

owing to the shortage of keep and the low price of beef, graziers could scarcely expect to do very well in 1901.

Mr Tindall, of Wainfleet Hall, our host in this district, managed among other estates those of Magdalen College, Oxford, and of Bethlem Hospital, commonly known as Bedlam, which holds large lands in this neighbourhood, bequeathed to it during the eighteenth century by Edward Barkham, a worthy and merciful man, whose tomb and memorial tablet we saw in Wainfleet Church.

Mr. Tindall, who informed us that during his time he had been agent for not less than 100,000 acres of land, and farmed as much as 4,000 acres at once, has had experience of all parts of the county, from Barton-on-Humber, in the extreme north, to Stamford, in the extreme south. He said, speaking of Lincolnshire generally, that in his opinion the best and most business-like farmers, men who do and think of nothing else than farming, could pay their rent, live and make from four to six per cent on their capital. Of the rest he added that they lived; but if present prices are to be the rule some would continue to go under. In fact, of late years good seasons and harvests had saved them in those parts. He thought that of late the salt Marsh and rich Fens had done best, the heavier marshlands well to good, the inland strong lands badly, the Wold districts very badly, and the Heath worst of all. The fall in rents and selling values from the good times he estimated at 40 per cent.

During the past five years, however, things were looking a little better, but in the season of 1901 they had received a check so severe that it might lead to a crisis even worse than that which they went through between 1893 and 1896. The heaviest blow that the sheep lands of the county had received was the drop in the price of wool, which on breeding farms meant a direct loss of from 3s. to 4s. an acre. Moreover, this was a loss without any compensation, since the expenses could not be lessened and the yield could not be increased. Sheep farming was the chief industry on the vast majority of high land farms

in Lincolnshire, and the tumble in wool was therefore the worst misfortune which has befallen that part of the county.

On the general question Mr Tindall stated that in 1894, which was in the depth of the depression, there were few applicants for Lincolnshire farms. Lately things had been better in this respect, since farmers are not suited to any other occupation; and so long as they can hope to make a rent and any percentage on their capital they will continue to take land. He feared, however, that there might be difficulties that year owing to the bad season, and that Wold farms will be hard to let. He thought that the supply of labour would fluctuate in accordance with the demand in the towns, that when trade was good there the country districts would go short, and when trade was bad they would get enough; also that a certain quantity would come back from the towns of those who found it difficult to live in them, but that its quality would be impaired. At present the question was 'tight,' as the boys were leaving, and the women, who no longer cared to work upon the land, desired to live in cities.

The labourers, he said, had never been so well off before, and as to paying them a higher wage, the land could not possibly bear the burden. He considered that bank holidays, cheap trips, and special trains were responsible for much of the exodus, and that boys in the fourth, fifth, and sixth standards of rural schools should receive a different training from that given in the urban schools. This ought to include an extension of the holiday time during the summer months, since if lads did not go on to the land while they were young they would never do so. Also, he was of opinion that, subject to a certain control of the central Authority, the management of the rural schools should be left in the hands of the county Councils—which if the new Education Act becomes law, now seems likely to be done.

The agricultural position, Mr Tindall said, was becoming very serious, and this question of the rural exodus ought to

be faced at once. If we were to remain even in a measure self-supporting, the land of England must be kept in cultivation, especially as the vigour of the nation is involved in the maintenance of its population on the land. He added that if the matter could be gone into it would be found, as he believed, that a very large percentage of British-born people who have in any way done well in their generation were bred in the country. Heavy taxation of the land, which is the raw material of the cultivator, by the piling on to it of rates and other imposts, he considered to be most unjust. Why, he asked, should the man who manufactures goods be rated only on the buildings in which they are manufactured, while the man who farms must pay, not only on his buildings, but on every acre of land which is necessary to turn them to any sort of profit?

With reference to the Agricultural Ratings Act he thought the Bill a bad one, since relief should not be given by way of dole. The agricultural interest was not in the position of a beggar, but in that of a claimant for justice, and the question should be dealt with from that point of view and on broad lines. Small-holders, he said, could live on suitable land, and ought to be encouraged. He thought that for the benefit of the country the Government should advance money at a low rate of interest to enable owners to create more small-holdings—of course, under proper conditions and security. Mr. Tindall considered, however—and this view is interesting—that these holdings should take the form of occupations, and not of ownerships.

His experience showed him that in Lincolnshire small freeholders had come to grief by the score, whereas in bad times small occupiers had fallen back on the generosity of their landlords; indeed, had it not been for these landlords, and their help and forgiveness of debts, half of these tenants would have been bankrupt. This argument of Mr. Tindall, I may say, is one with which personally I do not entirely agree, since, wherever it is possible, I think it an excellent thing that a man should own the land he

works. That it has a good deal of weight must, however, be admitted, since wherever the land is owned, there is both temptation and power to mortgage, and the average money-lender has not many bowels of compassion. If, on the other hand, it is only hired, there is always a landlord who can be appealed to, often with avail. At the worst the applicant may have to leave his holding, in which the capital that would otherwise have been expended in its purchase, ought to have given him a better chance of success. In husbandry now-a-days failure or its reverse, is not often a question of rent. 'We are in a critical state in Lincolnshire, and no one can quite see the end of it. The whole question is. Is agriculture to be kept subservient to all other interests in the State?' concluded Mr. Tindall

The quaint, old one-streeted town of Wainfleet, on the banks of the Steeping River, is adjoined by Wainfleet St Mary, where I saw Mr. J. L. Picker, who farmed 200 acres in Wainfleet and Friskney. Of these, seven acres were under early and fifteen under late potatoes, the rest being given up to wheat, oats, barley, seeds, beans, and roots. Also he kept sheep summer and winter, his ewes, which were Longwools crossed with Hampshire Down, being run on the seeds, then fed on the turnips and sold out in spring. His cattle were Lincoln Reds. The potato sets were, he informed me, started into growth by the use of the animal heat in byres and stables in the same fashion as I have described in the chapter on Jersey. Mr. Picker said that, putting aside the question of potato growing, if a man in this district would really farm and give his full attention to his business he could live. With wool and wheat at the prevailing prices, they did not expect to do more.

Mr. Picker told me that Wainfleet and Friskney were full of small-holders who did really well, mostly out of early potatoes. The strip of potato ground ran through Wainfleet, Friskney, Wrangle, Boston, Kirton, Algarkirk, and the Spalding and Holbeach districts. It was a belt of light, silty land lying between the Fen and the Marsh, which for this

purpose was worth twice as much as any other variety of soil. The season of 1901 and the five that went before it had been splendid for potatoes, but in wet years, after the first earlies had been dug, the crop brought in nothing. Only ten days before my visit 9 tons 13 cwt. of tubers had been dug from an acre of land in that neighbourhood and sold at £4 a ton, the cost of digging and basketing being about £2 10s. an acre. A man he knew purchased six or seven acres at £60 the acre, and having planted them with Duke of York potatoes, sold the crop at £38 an acre to a merchant who undertook its lifting. Of course this was not done every year, but those who were first on the market could make £35 an acre. He himself had grown three roods of early potatoes for six or seven years, and during all that time averaged a return of £20 from this little piece of land.

Labour was the greatest difficulty that they had to face on a large farm in that neighbourhood, as they could not get sufficient, and all the young fellows had gone away to towns. He thought, however, that they had 'seen 12 o'clock even in that respect,' as latterly the towns had sent back men, and the railways had paid them off. The schoolmaster said, however, that the lads would go to the nearest large town if they possibly could, although not in the same proportion as from Northamptonshire and other places. A number of the children were the sons of small-holders, and small-holdings tended to hold the population. The difficulty had been for these people to rent land, which for the most part belonged to small landowners, at a reasonable rate.

It commanded from £2 to £2 10s. an acre, and in the case of potato plots even more. Indeed, small-holdings of from five to twenty acres would fetch any reasonable figure that was asked for them, as even the fishermen wanted a piece of land. Of cottages there were not enough, and Mr. Picker said that he had been building in order to keep men who could not stop unless there was somewhere for them

to live. The ordinary wages were 2s. 6d. a day and up to 2s. 9d. in harvest. Generally there was a very strong competition for farms, also to purchase small lots of land. Thus, three roods and a house which Mr. Picker bought cost him £150. He let the plot for £12 a year and eventually sold it again for £200. Thirty years before the land in that district was held by gentlemen from the Wolds, who sold it off in fields, at prices varying from £60 to £110 an acre.

There were, he informed me, no country houses in that neighbourhood, where the proportion rented was small compared to that which was owned. The grass lands about Skegness had been bought by farmers to go with the Wold farms, but now these men had nearly all gone, and the land was not worth more than £40 an acre. The marshlands also, which were unadapted to potatoes, and held by heavily mortgaged owners, had in many instances been sold up at great loss. Mr. Picker said that, speaking generally, he took a hopeful view of the outlook so far as regarded the potato lands, but not so of the prospects of ordinary soil and ordinary farming. He told me that he gave his potatoes from ten to fifteen tons of 'crewyard,' that is, farmyard manure, per acre.

Mr. Edmund Woodhead, a thoughtful and intelligent small farmer, whom I saw at Friskney, said that like his father and grandfather, he was a small-holder. His father owned ten acres, out of the produce of which his mother had brought up three of them. He had only purchased four acres more, but he rented the comfortable house in which we met and other land, up to a total of fifty acres. Mr. Woodhead told me that there were many small-holdings in Friskney averaging about ten acres in size; indeed he gave us a list of no fewer than seventy-nine such holdings, of which the largest was about fifty-two and a half acres, and the smallest under two acres. He declared, also, that he could not speak too highly of the small-holding system and its good effects in that parish, as amongst other things it

brought back the people from the cities to the land. Thus he enumerated thirteen men, including himself, in Friskney, all of whom went out into the world in order to earn enough capital to enable them to take land, who had returned and taken the land after a period of work in towns, as railway guards, signalmen, carters, policemen, milkmen, green-grocers, &c.; also of two others who had already bought land there which they intended to occupy.

Still, Friskney, which has a population of about 1,300, had, he said, lost seventy inhabitants during the previous ten years, the fact being that there were not enough houses to enable the people to increase, as otherwise they would do naturally. Mr Woodhead stated that the purchasers of little lots of land in that neighbourhood never paid the price in full, two thirds of which, at least, was advanced by Boston solicitors and left on mortgage at about $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. He thought that it would be a great help if such people could borrow from Government at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. up to two thirds of the value of their land, instead of having to pay $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to private lenders. Generally, he was a strong believer in small-holdings, and in favour of their extension wherever the soil and circumstances would permit. He mentioned lands, which were let at from 26s. to 30s. an acre as large farms, which if cut into fifty-acre holdings would fetch 50s. an acre and enable many hard-working people to prosper.

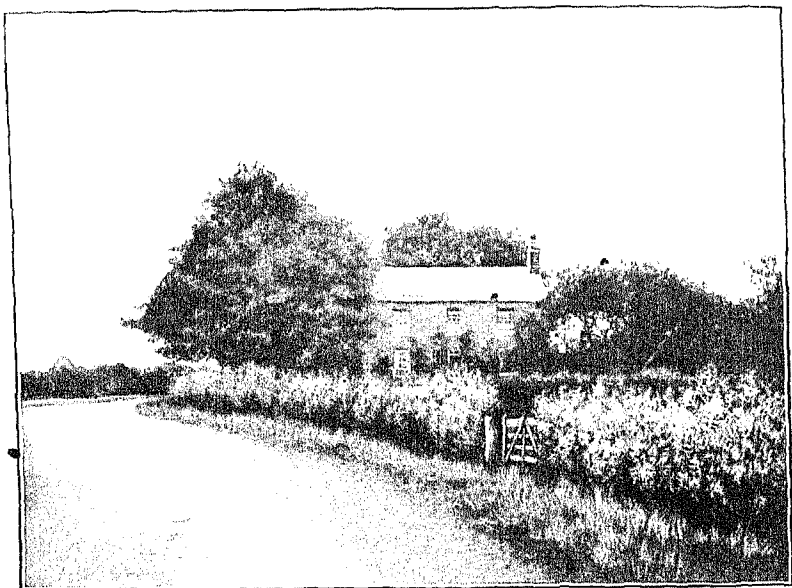
I pointed out that then the old question of the necessary buildings, cottages, &c. would arise, but here again Mr. Woodhead was of opinion that it should be possible to borrow money from Government for the purpose of their erection at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., to include a sinking fund which would provide for the repayment of the capital at the end of a term of years. He furnished me with some interesting information of the approximate cost of growing an acre of early potatoes, to which, however, must be added the rent of the land, estimated at the high figure of £4 if let by the single acre,

Ploughing twice and working land	1	2	0
Planting		12	0
Weeding		6	0
Scuffling and hilling		8	0
Digging and carting to station	3	0	0
One ton fair-sized seed	3	10	0
Artificial manure	2	5	0
Total (per acre)	£11	3	0

As to the returns he quoted the following instances. In the season of 1901, which, it must be remembered, was an extraordinarily good potato year in this district, Mr. — sold four acres of potatoes for a total sum of £130. Mr. — off 4a. 1r lifted forty-six tons of British Queens, which would average about £4 per ton on the market. In these instances, of course taking the table of expenses as accurate, potato growing must have proved a very profitable business, but it must be remembered that in a wet year, such as that of 1902, there would be a different tale to tell. Early potatoes, Mr. Woodhead said, should be planted about the last week in March and be ready for digging in the last week in June. After they were out of it, it was customary to sow the land at once with turnips, which in the case of allotment holders were useful to help to feed a cow, and in that of larger farmers could be fed off with sheep.

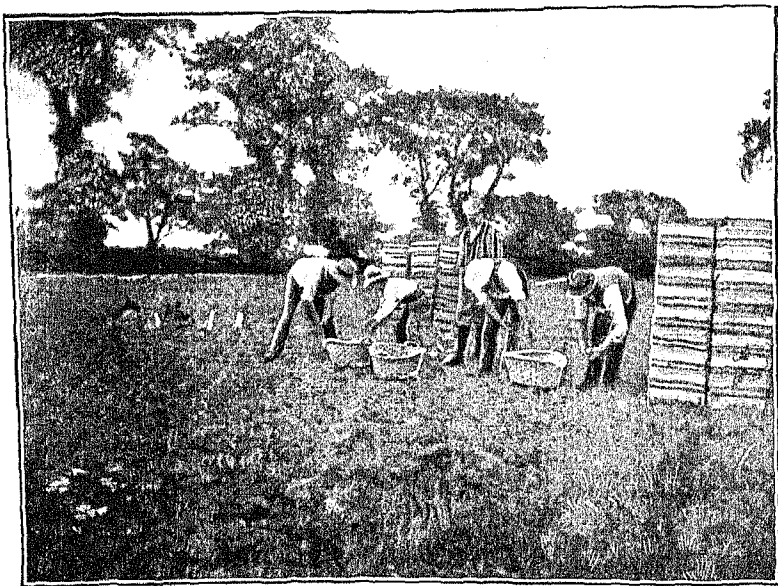
I should add that Mr. Woodhead told me that the land of many of the small freeholders had been mortgaged in the old days at figures higher than the present market price, but that in nearly every instance they had managed to pay the interest and to keep going until the mortgage was foreclosed. Also in most cases they had been generously treated by the mortgagees.

In driving from Mr. Woodhead's to the Vicarage I noticed that then, in the beginning of July, all the early potatoes had been lifted, and that the turnips drilled upon the ground—a very thriving crop—were already up and singled. I observed also that a crop of wheat we passed



SMALL-HOLDER'S HOUSE NEAR WAINFLEET

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ON MR. DISBROWE'S BULB FARM AT BENINGTON

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was largely intermixed with reeds. This came from the bad habit of digging out the ditches and dressing the land with their contents, without first weathering the mud for a year or so in order to kill the seeds and roots. A third little natural object brought home to my mind how great is the intelligence—or the instinct—of animals when their own comfort is concerned. The day was hot, and in an unshaded field stood twelve steers which had ingeniously arranged themselves alternately in a tightly packed line, so that the head of number one was level with the stern of number two, and the head of number three with the rump of number four, and so on. By this disposition of their bodies the tail of each was made to do duty as a fly whisk for the head of its brother.

Here in Friskney about 97 per cent. of the soil is arable ; nor, fertile as it is, could the flat land be called attractive in appearance. It is curious that it should be so generally the case that, by one of the compensations of nature, the ugliest soil should also often be the richest. It reminds me of a mine in which I once had shares, now, alas ! represented by the value of a nicely engraved piece of paper. An expert went out to inspect the mine, whom I interviewed upon his return. His report was all that could be desired in every particular. 'Then,' I said, 'the prospect must be very good.' He hesitated and answered, 'I should say so, only the place is so charming, the country so healthy, and generally the conditions are so favourable, that after a long experience, notwithstanding all evidence to the contrary, I find it *impossible* to believe that a really good gold mine can exist there.' As it happened this somewhat illogical conclusion, drawn from his study of the universal scheme of things, proved more accurate than the expert's judgment as a mining engineer. No good gold mine *did* exist in that picturesque and salubrious spot.

The Rev. H. J. Cheales, who for forty years had been the Vicar of Friskney, informed me that the small-holders, to whom he considered the parish was much indebted, were doing better in 1901 than was the case ten years before.

In the potato season a man could, he said, earn 4s 6d. a day, or with his family perhaps as much as 12s 6d. a day. They arranged in their school to give the children six weeks' holiday in the busy months, from July 1 to August 14, and personally he would like to see the school terms made more elastic. He said that in his time he had seen fourteen farms broken up in that parish or its immediate neighbourhood. Indeed there was scarcely a farm that had not changed hands: all the old class had gone, mostly through bankruptcy.

I asked Mr. Cheales whether, supposing that the big holdings round could be divided, the land would be taken up by small people in little lots. He answered, 'Yes, if the Government would advance money to erect the necessary buildings.' Mr. Cheales, who at the date of my visit was a confirmed invalid, caused himself to be wheeled into the Church of All Saints to show me the mural paintings for which it is famous among archæologists. Unfortunately I have no space to describe these curious mediæval decorations, every inch of which were rid of their six coats of whitewash by his own hands—the labour of thirteen years—and can only add, therefore, that they are well worth the attention of all who are interested in such matters.

Mr. Robert Robinson, the schoolmaster and rate collector of Friskney, informed me that the two largest farms in the parish were one of 1,100 and one of 226 acres. The tenant of the larger of these began life, he said, in a very humble position, but had gradually by industry and enterprise worked his way up, as it seems to be possible for deserving men to do in that district. Although much of the land was mortgaged, he had, he declared, never lost a halfpenny since he collected the rates in Friskney. He was of opinion that the small-holdings helped to keep the people on the land, as the sons of these people remained in the villages. He did not think that the young men went away so much as they used to do, though what became of the girls he could not say, as servant maids were un-

obtainable. He believed that if more land could be had in Friskney, it would all be taken up by small-holders.

In driving on through Wrangle, Leake, and Leverton to Bonington it was plain from the grandeur of the churches that this district has been prosperous for many centuries owing, doubtless, to the great fertility of its land. I imagine, moreover, that this prosperity was not, as in many parts of England, concentrated in a few hands, but has been always diffused among the population, and therefore the more genuine and abiding. All the way from Wainfleet to Wrangle, and from Wrangle on towards Boston, the road is lined with neat dwellings having good gardens, and little crofts where may be seen cows and poultry—mostly of the Lincolnshire Buff breed, now, I think, called Buff Orpingtons. These holdings are very neatly fenced, and each fence is bordered by a shallow ditch. Although I saw no country seats, and, as I understood, no great squires live in this flat and in some ways uninteresting land, I remember few districts that gave me such an impression of the general well-being of their inhabitants.

And as it is now, so probably it was in the days of the Romans, when, as I conceive, agricultural England was much richer than is generally suspected. At any rate, the road on which we drove runs, and probably always has run, along the top of one of the sea embankments thrown up by that race in order to reclaim land from the ocean. In no age, I maintain, would people go to such labour and expense unless the soil to be won were valuable and sought after. Here all the crops were very good, including the white mustard seed which we saw being reaped by Irish labourers. The beans were about the best that I had met with; the wheat ran that in the Isle of Axholme hard; the barley gave promise of returning quality as well as quantity; the roots were a good plant, and there was a full second-cut of clover. Also we saw some, but not much, celery, and apple trees bearing plenty of fruit. I understand that one of the drawbacks to this district is a lack of spring or well water, which

forces the inhabitants to depend to a large extent upon rain for their supply.

At Benington, where the soil is a rich loam with a silty subsoil, and much celery, wheat, and potatoes are grown, I saw the venerable rector, Canon Disbrowe, also his son, Mr. E. J. W. Disbrowe, who has established a bulb-growing business at the Welbourn Nurseries, in the parish. Canon Disbrowe said that in potato time men could earn 4s., women 2s., and children 1s. 6d. a day. For nine months out of the year the supply and demand of labour were about equal, but at potato time the wages 'bounced up.' Here this class was very migratory, and often the labourers changed their situation every year. They were fairly well-to-do, and the work among the potatoes enabled the children to earn all the clothes they wore.

The Canon told me that he let about nineteen acres of land to small people, and could dispose of twice the quantity in the same way if he liked to take it from his other tenants. As an instance of the fall in value even of the black land, he told me he had an estate of, I think, 264 acres, in Wildmoor fen, which thirty-two years previously was worth £600 a year, and in 1901, less drainage rates, £330 a year. At this rate, however, the tenant, who had been his groom, was prosperous. Amongst other documents of interest Canon Disbrowe showed me a note made by John White, schoolmaster, on March 24, 1801, who remarked that it was 'raining hard' at that date

Wheat, £8-£9 per quarter.

Barley, £4-£5 ,,

Beef, 9s.-10s. per stone of 14 lb.

Mutton, 9d. per lb.

No wonder with agricultural produce fetching such prices, that in 1815 the new sea bank was taken in hand, together with extensive drainage works, whereby many thousand acres were added to the cultivable area of Lincolnshire.

After leaving the rectory I went over Mr. E. Disbrowe's flower farm of twelve acres, which he hoped soon to enlarge.

The cost of labour and rent he put at about £30 an acre, and the land, he said, being rich, friable, and light, was admirably suited to bulb culture. He used little or no manure, as experience showed him that few of these flowers would stand even a top dressing. Mr. Disbrowe said that the price which the best healthy stuff commanded returned a profit, and that with the exception of hyacinths, he believed he could compete both in price and quality with the foremost Dutch bulb growers. He supplied bulbs and flowers, both retail and wholesale, everything being grown and packed under his personal supervision. The flowers, he said, paid his rent and labour, while the bulbs furnished the profit.

When I visited his interesting farm in August there was, of course, no bloom to be seen, but scores of potato boxes were piled one upon another, containing choice stock to weather in the open, and in other places men were engaged in lifting and sorting the ripened bulbs.

At Spalding, where unfortunately I was not able to stay, this spring flower trade, as I am informed, has attained gigantic proportions.

Mr. Bowser, whom I saw in Friskney, farmed 2,700 acres in that parish, East Fen, Leverton, Old Leake, and Scremby, his brother, who is named, I think, Mr. Alfred Bowser, and lived in the same parish, farming 6,000 acres on the Wolds, in Fiskerton, and elsewhere. Mr. Bowser said that he began as a one-horse man on forty acres of land when he was twenty-three years of age; that is about thirty years ago. His brother joined him, and they stocked a little farm, since when, he added, 'I have steadily rolled up the ball.' In talking of the price of wool he told me that he had sold it at £3 a tod, but that in those days he only had seven sheep. In 1901 he ran 1,300 or 1,400. He remarked that the reason why men like himself went on increasing their acreage was that it was not in a farmer's line to put money in the funds; if they made a little they took a new holding or bought another bit of land. Often he had felt that he would do no more, and yet he had just taken a fresh farm. He said he

thought that farmers of ability in this district could pay their rent, make a living, and save a little. The average rent there was 30s. an acre—that was what he paid for most of his land, which was nearly all good. On the 2,700 acres which he held—of which about 400 were grass—his labour bill came to £3,000 a year.

Although it had been a little better just lately, the labour was, he informed me, worse than it used to be, and they could not get the work done properly, so that the grass lands were neglected. The boys went into the towns, as education gave them a taste for something better than working in the fields. Mr. Bowser approved of small-holdings so long as they were not overdone, but thought that such people could not do much unless the land was very good. On some of his farms he grew mustard seed and potatoes, but of the latter not so many as he used to do, owing to the labour difficulty. His custom was to try to suit the crop to the land, and sometimes he followed the old four-course shift. He had only a small dairy, as he could not find anyone to look after milk and butter. He bred a number of sheep and cattle, fattening out the latter, and reckoned to rear 100 calves a year, two each on the strong cows. His lambs he began to sell out about Christmas, and by May was rid of them all.

Mr. Bowser said that owing to the drought, they had experienced very good seasons of late years, as on that land, 'when everybody else is starving we grow fat.' In 1901 things looked as well as ever except the oats, which would be a very mean crop, not more than about five quarters to the acre, whereas in 1898 and 1899 they threshed twelve. Talking of sheep and the thread-worm which killed so many of them in Lincolnshire, Mr. Bowser gave me the curious bit of information that after the second growth of clover eddish has been eaten off; the third growth is, in his own words, 'poison to them.' If they are affected from this cause, as a cure he turned them on to young seeds.

In the Fens he put his sheep on to kohl-rabi and rape,

on which they did splendidly. The general system of fattening these seemed to be first to run them on the out-marsh on the sea front, then on rape, then on turnips, and finish with swedes. Sheep, however, he seemed to think required a good deal of watching in that district, as if once they were allowed to go wrong the loss was likely to be heavy. Indeed Mr. Bowser declared that he had known farmers lose the whole of their stock in four years. Speaking of the exodus from the country, Mr. Bowser expressed the opinion that the towns were becoming congested and that the people would come back to the land, although he added that they would have to be 'pretty well punished' before they did so. The women, he informed me, could earn some money at the potato season, but would not come out to work at other times.

After leaving Mr. Bowser we saw really splendid crops, some of which, I dare say, were his: beans six or eight feet high, and wheat being cut on land rented at 25s. or 26s. an acre, which was estimated to produce six quarters to the acre. Also there was white mustard six feet high, and thick and stout in proportion. Driving along the Roman bank near Wainfleet, we passed also shallow earth enclosures, not unlike those of old fishponds, which are said to have been used by that people for the precipitation of salt from the sea water, when the ocean, that is now two miles away, came up to the edge of this land. Also there were other ancient earth-works which must have served as fortifications.

On a subsequent day I visited Mr. Robert James Epton, of Northolme Farm, Wainfleet St. Mary, where he held 1,243 acres, the property of W. Powlett, Esq. For this farm the former tenant in 1879, the year in which Mr. Epton entered, used to pay £2,946 6s. 7d. and, I think, the tithe. In 1901 the net rent was £1,935, that is, somewhere about 32s. the acre, the buildings being kept in tenantable repair by the occupier, an obligation which Mr. Epton said cost him £150 every third year. This circumstance shows clearly how much more prosperous are these parts of Lincolnshire than most of the English agricultural districts

The face of the Norfolk farmer, for instance, who was asked to take the burden of the upkeep of buildings off the shoulders of his landlord, would be well worthy of study. At Northolme also the tenant paid a drainage rate of £7 and all parish rates, and with other tenants maintained a private road, the cost of which to Mr. Epton was about £50 a year. The landlord on his part paid the tithe of £355 4s. 11d., the land tax of £42 17s. 4d., and the Steeping River drainage rate of £12 10s. The cropping of the farm in 1901 was divided as follows:—

Northolme Farm--Cropping in 1901

	Acre-		Acre-
Wheat	204	Mangold	17
Barley	93	Turnips and swedes . .	85
Oats	78	Permanent pasture . .	257
Peas	26	Meadow mown for hay .	12
Seeds to graze . . .	91	House and garden	} . 12
Clover mown . . .	78	Cottages and gardens	
Mustard seed . . .	168	Farmyards	
Turnip seed . . .	18 ^f	Enclosed roads . .	10
Potatoes	87	Delphs and waste . .	7
Total		1,243	

As it is typical of a holding of this size in the Wainfleet district, I give also a list of the live stock on the farm on August 12, 1901, and a summary of the wages paid in 1899, the last year for which the accounts were available, together with the added perquisites.

Live Stock, Northolme Farm, August 12, 1901.

Horses.

Hackneys	2
Shire mares, with 10 foals	10
Shire yearling colts and fillies	17
Two-year-old Shire colts and fillies	10
Other working horses	26
Total	75

Cattle

Bull	1
Cows feeding	3
Bullocks feeding	25
Steers	41
Calves	48
Breeding cows and heifers	65
Total	183

Sheep.

Rams	12
Breeding ewes	410
Shearling ewes	173
Lambs	453
Total	1,048

Pigs.

Sows	20
Young pigs	105
Total	125

Northolme Farm—Wages paid in 1899

	<i>£</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d.</i>
Cash	2,133	11	1
Beer for harvest	38	0	0
13 cottages rent free	61	0	0
270 stones pork, 5s. 9d.	77	12	6
Milk from 2 foremen's cows	16	0	0
Total	£2,326	3	7

This includes wages to one man acting as groom and gardener; also the wages of two men working threshing machine which goes out on hire.

Mr. Epton furnished me further with a very interesting statement of the average return in bushels and money per acre, of the wheat grown by him since the year 1858, arranged in periods of eight years, and of the prices of wool between 1860 and 1901. These I print also.

Average wheat crop grown by Mr R J Epton on all the farms occupied by him

	Per acre	Average price per quarter		Per acre		
		Bushels	s	d	s	d
8 years (1868-1875) . . .	35½	52	4	11	11	8
" (1876-1883) . . .	24½	46	3	7	3	2
" (1884-1891) . . .	36½	33	3	7	12	2
9 years (1892-1900) . . .	36	27	10	6	5	10

Prices of Wool.

17 years (1860-1876), average . . .	44s 6d. per tod
25 " (1877-1901) " . . .	22s. 6d. "

making a difference of about £200 a year.

In the year 1901 wool was 13s. per tod, making a difference of £320 a year from the amount realised in the first seventeen years quoted above.

These figures are in themselves so eloquent that I need not comment on them. Mr. Epton said that although he did not believe they were so badly off as some people, and theirs was a good country, the local condition of the farming industry was far from prosperous. He did not think that the ordinary farmer was saving money; indeed at the prevailing prices it was impossible to do so. He employed Irish labour very largely, as it was recognised that without it the harvest could not have been got in for years past. At the time of my visit to him he had fifty-one of these men sleeping in his barns, and could find employment for 150, but up to that date they had not arrived in their usual numbers.

Mr Epton—and in these days this is a strange story—had actually ploughed up 100 acres of pasture to put the land under more paying crops. He explained to us that on the sea side of the Roman road the soil was silt and should not be laid down in grass; whereas on the landward side, probably owing to the causes on which I have touched already, it was clay and best suited for grass. To

raise grass on silt that would grow potatoes and similar crops was a waste. White mustard, he said, did well in 1900, and he was growing more of it in 1901. Brown mustard was not often allowed to be sown, as it went wild and made the land foul for a generation. Clover, if ploughed in for manure, of which I saw an instance in Wainfleet, was worth 30s. an acre for this purpose. He gave an example of a field that had been ploughed in thus and left as a fallow till the August of the following year. Then it was sown with turnips, which were grown on through the winter and following spring, and harvested as seed in the ensuing summer. In this way a year's use of the land was lost, but the seed fetched £28 an acre on the market.

Mr. Epton said that if a small man wished to farm it seemed almost necessary for him to buy, as it was very difficult in that neighbourhood to rent or lease small lots of land. He told me of a labourer in the place who boasted that he had never been a foreman, who some years before, purchased a piece of land and grew potatoes and seeds, on which plot no doubt he had left some of the price on mortgage. This man, he said, was working 110 acres in 1901 and making a good living.

Driving on towards Skegness we saw to the westward a vast alluvial plain almost all of it under good grass that would feed a bullock to the acre. Dotted over this expanse were red brick and tiled houses of moderate size, while here and there, the tower or spire of one of the fine churches for which this neighbourhood is famous, appeared above its bower of surrounding trees. The drainage dykes which intersect this county were invisible to the eye, so that its aspect was that of primeval prairie land, over which swept a strong south-westerly breeze bending the long lines of poplars in its breath. Fifteen miles away, standing out boldly, rose the Wolds, capped with a canopy of dull rain clouds, the heritage of a passing thunderstorm. In winter this spot must be very bleak and desolate.

Turning inland at length we came to the parish of Croft,

where the value of the land varies very much. Some of it was infested with coltsfoot and reed, and not worth more than £1 an acre, while in the same parish and line of country were pastures that fetched up to £3 the acre. The Church of All Saints at Croft, a fine Decorated and Late Perpendicular building with a square tower, which we visited, was in but a poor state of repair, the condition of the graveyard being little short of scandalous. Within, the building with its broken, red tile flooring and its general air of dirt and neglect, struck me as scarcely worthy of so prosperous a parish, but the old oak screens and pews were very fine.

Evidently in 1629, one Richard True, churchwarden, repaired the roof, as his name is cut in bold letters on a beam. I think that it would scarcely have pleased Richard True to see the condition of his parish church in 1901. Here there is a fine brass lectern of fifteenth-century work, fashioned like an eagle. The story I heard of it was that the Cromwellians cut off its silver claws and threw it into a neighbouring dyke, where it was accidentally discovered during the present generation and restored to the church.

At Wainfleet St. Mary that afternoon I visited a very fine specimen of the Lincolnshire yeomen, a class that is growing daily more rare in every part of England, Mr. Charles Smithson, of Wainfleet Bank. Mr. Smithson, a man of sixty-nine years, who farmed 350 acres, of which over 100 were grass, informed me that he did not know how others got on but he earned his living 'this way,' and he held up his hands, which showed marks of many a year of heavy toil.

He said that he began by renting a rood of land from a parson at £1 a year, then he got an acre, then fourteen acres, and so upwards. He added that he worked from five in the morning till nine at night, and that he did not 'keep any dogs that don't bark, or cats as don't catch mice.' He paid about 35s. an acre rent and said that although two years before they had been short of labour, at the time of my visit he could always get a man. He thought, however, that it would be better for everybody if the boys

'had less learning and were more on the land.' His system was to breed, rear, and feed sheep and cattle, selling out the latter at from two to four years of age, as the case might be, after fattening them on roots, hay, and cake. Those who did not do that, Mr. Smithson said, did not make a living.

Here the roads all ran upon the crests of banks, and I noticed that barbed wire was largely used along the line of the dykes to keep the cattle out of them.

As we drove on our way towards Spilsby, which stands upon the Woldslopes, nine miles from Wainfleet, overlooking a great expanse of flat land, we passed through a portion of St. Mary's Fen, where the soil and subsoil were dark and peaty. Two fen farms which we saw in this neighbourhood, clay in character, were considered to be about the best in the district and certainly looked very fertile, although I observed that on the black land the oats and some of the barleys were laid. I believe that the fen lands are supposed to produce bulkier crops than do the marsh lands, but that their quality is not so good. About Eastville and New Leake lines of cottages stand along the roads and dykes and give a populous appearance to the countryside, also where fruit trees had been planted they seemed to do particularly well.

I think that it was in the village of Stickney that I saw Mr. Caudwell and part of his farm of 1,600 acres, 400 of which were his own property. Mr. Caudwell said that some farmers were doing well, others were only paying their rent and making a bare living, and others were faring very badly. For some time past the good yields had kept them together, but 1900 had been a very crippling year. Rents had gone down a good deal in that neighbourhood—25 per cent. or more. Thus land for which he used to pay 30s. an acre now cost him £1. Mr. Caudwell said that a good deal of the labour was Irish, although English labour was coming in a little in 1901. The lads were leaving and in any case were not of much use when they left school, the best of them being those whose fathers were horsemen, and

who were therefore accustomed to animals. Those who were to stop on the land must get to know the land young, as it was a thing that required study and early apprenticeship. He had been working at it for thirty years himself and was still learning.

Twenty-five years before Mr. Caudwell had ten or twelve good young men of two or three and twenty, but when we met he had not above four, and said that three men only did the work which used to be done by two. Then they took an interest in their tasks, but this they did no longer, and much time was idled away, also, if they were spoken to they became insolent. The local rate of wages was 15s a week, with a harvest worth £8 and privileges, but confined men took about £1 a week, and were hired by the year. For this period they were supposed to be bound, but if they could not agree master and man usually parted by mutual consent. As evidence of the scarcity of hands Mr. Caudwell said that he had a good cottage on the place, but although he had advertised for several weeks he could find no man to fill it, as people would not come out of the towns. He paid away £30 a week for labour.

Mr. Caudwell had no regular farming system, but his general course was oats, wheat, seeds, oats, peas, wheat, then fallow. Also he grew a good many tares which were fed off by sheep and followed by potatoes. He bred sheep and cattle, selling out the steers at one year and keeping the heifers to breed from. His sheep were both Lincolns and Crossbreds. The price of wool was, he declared, 'a knock-down blow.' Many farmers had kept theirs for years in hopes of realising a better figure. Thus one man whom he knew had probably 200 tons stored. Another had the clip of twenty-five years, perhaps 15,000 tods—eighty tods going to a ton, and forty-five or fifty fleeces to a sheet. This gentleman sold the clip of the first five years out of twenty-five, in 1900, at 11s. a tod. There was a time during that quarter of a century when he could have got rid of his wool at 50s. a tod, but he had held on.

Mr. Caudwell himself had a great deal of wool in hand, and said that he would be thankful if anyone would buy it at £1 a tod. He informed me that he did not take a hopeful view of the future, in fact, owing to the all-round depression in prices he grew daily more disgusted. With beef at 7s. 3d. a stone 'bullocks would only just keep together' and stores had been very dear that spring. He had made a practice of breeding all round which had kept him going. Thus, on one of his pea stubbles we saw a great herd of pigs which doubtless brought in some money in due course. Although he had averaged a return of five quarters an acre over twenty-five years, he said that he was losing on his wheat. Of this crop he used to grow 800 acres, but in 1901 was down to 200. His peas, which we saw being threshed as they came from the field, were a very good sample, and averaged five quarters to the acre. Mr. Caudwell could suggest no remedy for the prevailing state of things—unless it was a bounty upon wheat.

The reader will observe that so soon as the rich lowlands round Wainfleet are left behind, the agricultural tale becomes more depressing.

In the neighbourhood of Teynton, some seven miles from Wainfleet, we left the alluvial plain that here is from six to fifteen miles in width, and reached the foot of the Wolds. Thenceforward the ground rose gently, and there were many grass slopes carrying the usual complement of Red Lincolnshire cattle. At Eresby we passed a place of which the garden wall and one pillar of the entrance gate alone remained standing. It was, I believe, a seat of the Willoughby family, and is said to have been burned down in 1769 on the night when a lord of the manor returned there with his bride. Here the sandstone cropped to the surface of the soil.

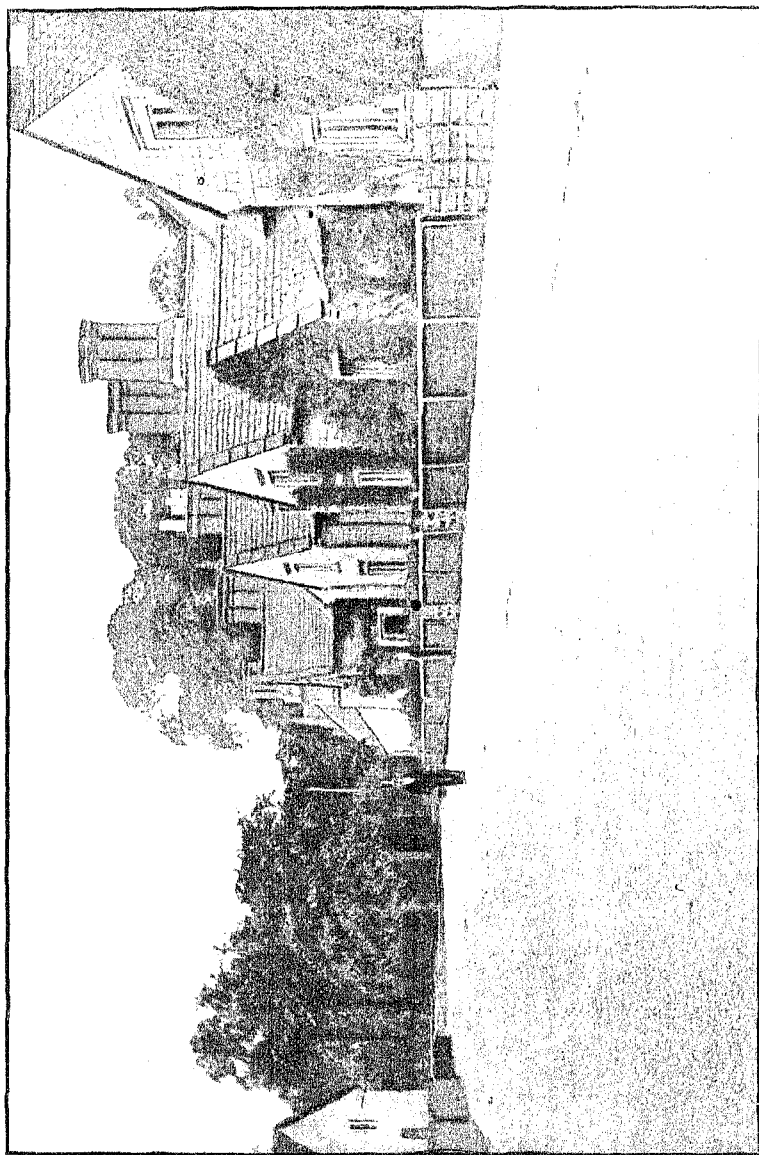
Spilsby, which we reached next, is a small market town with a beautiful church. In the Willoughby chapel are some of the finest monuments I ever saw, especially one of alabaster to the Knight, Lord Willoughby, General of

Queen Elizabeth's forces in the Low Countries, and his daughter Catherine, wife of Sir Lewis Watson, who died in childbirth, 1610, and was buried here at her own request. The lady in alabaster reclines upon her elbow, while the child lies in a cradle at her feet. This memorial was erected by her husband as 'a mark of both their virtues to the end of all posterity.' Also there are many others which I wish that I could stay to describe. In the market place there is a statue of Sir John Franklin, the discoverer of the Nor'-West Passage, who was born here in 1786.

Mr. W. Hoff, of Grebby Hall, the chairman of the district Council and a member of the county Council, whom I met at Spilsby, was a farmer of 1,500 acres, most of which I understood lay upon the Wold. Mr. Hoff, who certainly ought to be able to judge of the local position, inasmuch as he informed me that he hired land, let land, and farmed his own land, said that he thought the agricultural prospect very bad, and that in it he could see no redeeming point in 1901. There was not a thing which the Wold farmer had to sell that was making a price, and the outlook there was full of danger.

The labour was scarce and bad; indeed, this was one of the worst features of the position. The young men went away to the towns and would not come back; although the trade was slack in many of them, yet they did not return. Thus his shepherd had three strong lads all of whom had gone. He still hoped, however, that there would be a reaction in this matter; if not, he wondered what would happen when the old men died out. No Irish came to the Wold and he had never employed one of them. His men and their fathers worked for his grandfather. He thought that better and more cottages might help to keep the people, but to suggest any positive remedy was beyond him. Small-holdings would not answer on the Wold or on clay soil, as the land was not good enough; 'it would pine them to death.' Mr. Hoff's usual course was turnips, barley, seeds, wheat.

On our way homeward we drove through Firsby, where



MODEL VILLAGE OF BLANKNEY

the soil is loam with a clay subsoil, and Irby, where it is mostly a poor arable. I was told that once strong, good grass grew here which was broken up when wheat was £3 a quarter. In 1901 the land was said to rent at about £1 an acre. In Thorpe parish we passed an ancient, strong-land grass meadow which lets every year at £5 the acre, and has fetched as much as £6 for grazing purposes. This field would turn out old cows that were put upon it to fat, at a weight of seventy stone; indeed, some we saw there would have scaled nearly as much. A few hundred yards further on the land to the left of the road was worth 40s. and to the right 70s. the acre, the difference being due partly to a variation in quality, and partly to the fact that the cheaper land had been grazed too hard by sheep for a number of years. All the way back to Wainfleet harvest operations were in full swing, and the crops on the whole looked good.

In the old days the roads in these fen districts were so bad in many instances as to be almost impassable. I was told a good story of a local clergyman who in bygone years was remonstrated with by his bishop for neglecting to hold service in one of his churches in winter. He replied: 'My Lord, the Devil himself would find it impossible to get to my Fen church in winter, but I promise you to be there before him in the spring!'

Travelling from Wainfleet to Louth, we passed along the fringe of the Wold where it slopes down to the Marsh, through land which seemed to be divided almost equally between arable and pasture. At Louth we struck westward, dropping down into the valley land around Lincoln, coming near Wragby to a stretch of strong soil, a good deal of which has been laid down to pasture since the fall in the price of wheat. It cannot be said that it looked well in the dry season of 1901. About Kingthorpe is some gravelly soil which grows potatoes. Here the barley was but moderate, and sometimes bad, and the meadows were very scorched and bare. One field of oats near to Bardney appeared to be the

worst that we had seen in Lincolnshire. After Bardney we passed through black fen lands, on which are grown many potatoes, to Lincoln.

On one day of our stay with him our host, Mr. Dickinson, of Branston, a well-known miller and farmer in this part of Lincolnshire, conducted us upon a long drive across Lincoln Heath to the charming little market town of Sleaford, and back again by the lowland to Branston. Our outward route ran along the old coach road which passed from Barton-on-Humber through Sleaford to London. Our forefathers who travelled that country a century and a half ago, stopping amid its dreary wastes of tussock grass and gorse to refresh themselves at lonely inns, which, where they still exist, have been turned to the purposes of farmsteads, might find difficulty in recognising it to-day.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century corn rose enormously in price, with the result that the enterprising landowners of that period broke up and enclosed the Heath, of which, I believe, not an acre now remains in its natural state. Before that time it was so difficult and dangerous to travel that, various wanderers having lost their path and lives upon its exposed plateau on winter nights, a gigantic pillar was erected at Dunston, at the head of which a great lamp burned from dusk to dawn to be a guide to all who attempted the passage of the Heath. After the enclosure of the moor this land lighthouse—the only one which ever I saw or heard of—becoming useless, an Earl of Buckinghamshire who flourished in the year 1810 commemorated the jubilee of King George III by erecting upon the pillar a colossal statue of that king. So there he stands in his robes, crown, and sceptre, and doubtless will stand for many a generation, looking with stony eyes out over the wide lands of Lincoln.

The Heath itself may perhaps measure fifteen miles by twenty. It is a great open place with very few houses, no visible church or villages, and a tiny population. All of it is cultivated, but in 1901 the crops were very indifferent,

the barley, although of a good colour, being especially thin. Its staple products, as on the Wold, are sheep, barley, and turnips, no wheat worth mentioning being raised; but it is to be feared that the farmers did not grow rich upon them in that dry season. In a good year, however, the Heath sample of barley is excellent, and, being much in demand among brewers, will fetch as high as 40s. a quarter. The estimated yield of the 1901 crop of barley on some of the great Heath farms was only about three and a half quarters per acre, and Mr. Dickinson told us that from twenty-four acres of wheat land upon its borders, only forty-seven quarters had been threshed; that is, under two quarters to the acre.

The farms are for the most part large, and, like those which we saw among the Downs of Southern Wiltshire, laid out in narrow strips reaching from the crest of the ridge to the eastern Fen below. Thus the parish church of one which we passed stands at a distance of nine miles from the door of the steading. The sandy loam soil of this region—that, to make it profitable, in strange contrast to the fens and marshes, requires a shower of rain every few days—lies upon a bed of almost waterless limestone out of which are built the miles of walls that take the place of hedges.

As we sat together in the carriage Mr. Dickinson told us sad stories of the wreck of ram-breeders and other unlucky followers of the art of agriculture, indicating localities whence they had departed, leaving behind them only a few shillings in the pound. To these he gave a point by examples from his own experience. It seems that the produce of 521 acres brought him in some £2,000 more in the year 1889 than it did in the year 1900. In 1889 he sold barley at 41s. a quarter; in 1900 he sold a smaller crop for 29s. a quarter. In 1889 the wool sold for 26s. a tod; in 1901 it was not worth more than 14s. In 1900 there was a drop of £500 in the sale value of his sheep compared to what they had fetched in 1889; and so forth. Here are some detailed figures for the two years.

Brunston Barley Crop, 1900.

142 acres (4½ qrs. per acre); average 6 lb. over.

			£	s	d
Sold Bass & Co.	34 qrs. at 34s.		57	10	0
„ Dunham & Son	53 „ 32s.		84	10	0
„ „ „	66½ „ 30s.		99	0	0
„ „ „	23½ „ 32s.		37	9	6
„ „ „	86 „ 30s.		128	11	6
„ Bass & Co.	58 „ 32s.		92	5	0
„ Gilstrap & Earp	65 „ 29s.		93	18	6
„ Bembridge	87 „ „		125	14	0
„ Gilstrap & Earp	67 „ „		96	16	6
„ Hinderends	36 „ 24s (used for stock)		43	4	0
Total .	576 qrs.; average 29s. 10d.		£858	19	0

NOTE.—Poor yield and poor price. Sold it well for the season.

	£	s	d.
236½ qrs. wheat, average about 29s	341	13	0

NOTE.—Best labourers' wage, 2s. 9d. per day; others, 2s. 6d. most of the year. Sheep much lower, wool much lower. Deficiency very serious

In short, Mr Dickinson said that many of the farmers were in the hands of the Banks. They were 'cracked if not broken, and for some time past we have been living on our own fat.' It is to be feared that in the light land districts of Lincolnshire these tales are but too common. I should add that upon these Heath farms, from 10s. to 12s. an acre seemed to be the prevailing rent.

Leaving the Heath at length we passed into land that evidently has been enclosed from ancient days. Here, the soil having more substance, the crops looked better, the roots covering the ground, and the wheats and barleys being fairly good. Driving through the pretty village of Leasingham, the first that we had passed since entering Lincoln Heath, we came at length to the town of Sleaford. Here I had an interview with Mr. Smith, who farmed 300 acres, and was the landlord of the Bristol Arms. He said he thought that the farmers were in a 'pretty bad way,' and that the crops

that year were light. Thus he himself had just sold thirty-six quarters of wheat grown on crech land, which was similar to the Heath, being the total produce of a twelve-acre field, at 28s. 3d. a quarter; nor had he heard of any wheat lands in the neighbourhood giving a better return that year. The local labour, he added, was scarce, but there were plenty of Irishmen to be had, so that, generally speaking, there was a sufficiency of hands. The crech clay lands brought in, he estimated, an average rent of £1 an acre, and the Heath land 10s. an acre. He said that first class cart-horses made money, but that a man might breed six and only get one good. As for many of the farmers he thought that they must be living on their capital—while it lasted.

From Sleaford we returned to Branston by the lower road, which runs through a richer country and past many prosperous-looking villages. In the neighbourhood of Ruskington we saw some brickworks which were then closed. It appears that bricks fell from 36s. a thousand down to 13s. a thousand, at which price they no longer paid to make, so these works had been abandoned. Near to Digby Mr. Dickinson pointed out to us a large estate for which in bygone years he bid no less than £35 an acre. Fortunately for himself his offer was not accepted.

At Blankney, which is or was the property of the Right Hon. Henry Chaplin, M.P., are some of the best cottages I have seen, built of stone and very picturesque. Indeed, this may be called a model village. At Dunston, some miles further on, we called upon the clergyman, Mr. Bourne, who said that the farmers were especially well off in that district, but that there were complaints of want of labour, and that young men were leaving to a certain extent. He thought that children were employed upon the farms at too early an age. By this I gathered he meant that as the law obliges them to attend school, they were forced to work in the fields before and after school hours, especially at the delivery of milk, with the result that they are worn out with this

double toil. He said also that 'it would be well if the Education Department would realise that the country school is different from the town school,' and arrange its curriculum accordingly. Mr. Bourne appeared to be of opinion that it would be a good plan for country children to cultivate their books in winter and the land in summer.

The next village that we passed was Nocton, where the cottages, built, I understand, by the Marquess of Ripon, are also neat stone buildings, commodious, pleasing in appearance, and generally all that such dwellings ought to be. The country here is well wooded, and the fields, which are not large, are surrounded with tall fences; also I saw pasture lands with good oaks growing upon them. Indeed the scenery reminded me of much with which I am acquainted in my own county of Norfolk. Next we came to Potter Hanworth, whence we had a magnificent view of Lincoln Minster, some six miles away, standing out splendidly upon its mount in the red light of the evening, against a background of inky sky. I have now seen almost every cathedral in England, but for position and majesty I do not think that any of them can compare with Lincoln, not even that of Ely. So after our long day's journeying we returned at last to Branston.

Mr. J. Laverack, of North Carlton, whom I met at Mr. Dickinson's, farmed 4,300 acres, of which the greater part was on the Cliff, and 300 were grass in the bottom below the Hill. Mr. Laverack said that the season of 1901 was one of the most disastrous which had been experienced, and that he had felt its pinch. For the last two or three years farmers had been living on capital, and those who had few resources might go under, although rents had been reduced to about £1 per acre. In one Union of Lincolnshire of thirty or forty parishes with which he was acquainted, only one or two farmers paid income tax under Schedule B in the year 1900, as they satisfied the Authorities that their returns were correct and they had not earned sufficient to be chargeable. Some of them indeed proved a large loss. Of labour

he said they had plenty, but the men were old and its cost was increased. Thus in 1897 he paid £850 under this head, and in 1901, £1,075. He had only a few young men who worked by the day. The wages of the confined men, such as shepherds, garthmen, &c. varied from 18s to 22s. a week. Mr. Laverack informed me that he would like to be clear of farming. He thought that the present system of things would come to an end. Either enough land must be hired to justify the employment of all the most modern and labour-saving machinery, or farmers must take holdings sufficiently small to be worked by themselves and their families.

Mr. J. Pears, J.P., of Mere, who farmed 600 acres on the Heath and 300 in Branston, said that he had plenty of labour. The rents varied from 26s. down to 9s., according to the quality of the land. His standby was barley, and he made a speciality of the breeding of rams, of which he turned out 150. He followed a five-field course: turnips, barley, seeds (two years) and barley again.

Mr. Robert Wright, of Nocton Heath, I believe one of the foremost Lincolnshire stock breeders, informed me he was sure that no man who farmed in the ordinary fashion could make it pay in that district. To do this he must have some speciality such as the breeding of pedigree sheep or cattle.

On Mr. Dickinson's farm, which I went over, the swedes were very fair for the season, but some of the barley sown on May 17 was ripening unevenly. A really fine flock of sheep were feeding on seeds which would afterwards be ploughed for wheat. His pedigree ram lambs, of which he had sixty-three, were receiving $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of cake a day, with maize and bran. Mr. Dickinson valued them at £10 a head. Here the barley was being cut and bound with a binder which I watched at its work, reaping, delivering to the table by the help of a moving canvas screen, tying into bundles, knotting, cutting, and ejecting. In Norfolk there appears to be a prejudice against using these self-binders for barley, which for my part I think

foolish, as the extra time and labour necessitated by hand mowing, together with the risk resulting from a longer exposure to the chances of the weather, seem to neutralise the advantages of a more delicate and careful treatment of the grain, which thus escapes being trodden by horses and imperfect mowing when laid. At the same time all the weeds and green stuff that are tied up in the sheaves by the binder must be detrimental to the sample.

Mr. Dickinson pointed out with much truth that a good turnip crop is the foundation of successful farming on the Lincolnshire Heath. Barley is the staple on which they rely there, and without turnips there are no sheep, and without sheep, or rather the manure which they leave, there can be little barley. On Mr. Dickinson's farm I saw an ash tree which had been struck by lightning on the previous night, and in a very curious fashion. The flash fell on the fork of the tree, when part of it passed down the bark and part entered the heart of the trunk to emerge in several separate exits at the root.

While I was in Lincolnshire I had conversations with various gentlemen connected with banking. One of these, a gentleman of much knowledge and experience, told me he thought that many of the farmers were in a bad way and had been losing money during the last few years. Rent was a minor point and had nothing to do with the trouble, which was due to the prices and season. These were shocks that few men could stand, and the year of 1901 was one of the worst which they had experienced. Small farms let readily, but there was some difficulty with the larger holdings; also the class of tenant had changed. For a long time Banks advanced money to farmers to meet their rent, but now when they found that they were not repaid after harvest, they discontinued the practice. It had become a matter for the landlords to deal with. Their wish and object was to get out of agricultural affairs.

Generally there was, he said, a scarcity of labour. One large farmer he knew of had given up because of this

trouble, and others had bought self-binders to help them out of the difficulty. The young people came to the soil too late to wish to stay there, although they tried to accommodate the school holidays to the harvests. He thought that, considered from a national point of view, the rural depopulation question was most serious: also that the incidence of the rates was very unfair. There ought to be equalisation of taxation on real and personal property: land should not be left to carry so large a share of the poor and other rates.

This is an opinion with which many people who have studied the matter will agree cordially; but as most of the voting power seems to be in the hands of the holders of personal property, who care little for abstract justice and object very much to any such redistribution of burdens to their own disadvantage, small advance is made towards an equitable settlement. However little it can afford to do so, the land still pays.

Mr. T. B. F. Eminson, of Gonerby House, Scotter, a medical Officer of Health for the Gainsborough Union, kindly furnished me with an able and interesting report of the local conditions in his district of Lincolnshire, and of his views concerning matters connected with the land. He said that in the Scotter neighbourhood as elsewhere agricultural depression existed, but owing to the production by the farmers of large quantities of potatoes and carrots, and on the Trent-side Warp land of celery, it was not so acute as in the Southern Counties. Indeed on the whole it might be called fairly prosperous. Labour was scarce, but to him the most noticeable thing was the change in the physique of the men. When Mr. Eminson was a boy thirty-six years ago the agricultural labourer, although he was often illiterate, was a fine man both physically and mentally, averaged 5 ft. 8 in. or more, and possessed a splendid constitution. Now, except in the case of the old people, he was much changed, and most of the middle-aged or young men who were left upon the land were, Mr. Eminson declared, physically or mentally deficient, one-eyed, lame, deaf,

weakly, small, or half-witted. In a word, they were the rejected of the towns, and the skilled labourer of former days was rapidly disappearing.

The cause of this state of things was to be sought in various directions. Thus bad cottages were a great reason for the rural exodus. Young labouring men would often settle down in their native villages if they could find decent houses to which to take a wife, but failing this, they went into the towns and married there. The only remedy was a supply of houses with sufficient sleeping room and with garden ground attached, but as to how this was to be attained he had no new suggestion to make. It was a national and not a local question.

As an instance of the effects of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions Mr. Eminson quoted the following case. A fine young man came to a village near at hand, married, and settled down, and being clever and industrious proved an excellent husband and father. The house where he lived was a low, thin-walled, unspouted structure with one living room below and one bedchamber in the roof. In this small sleeping place with a sloping ceiling, there slept every night the man, his wife, a third adult, and two children. What wonder, he asked, that in a few years this young man died of consumption, and what wonder that the village where such cottages were provided sunk a sixth in population in a decade? On this point the only comment I have to make is that, bad as things may be in that respect in some of our country districts, they are infinitely worse in the towns.

In his opinion, another cause of the rural depletion was that the towns offered more excitement—more life as it was called—and shorter hours of work. It should be remembered, however, that eight hours in a workshop or a coalpit took far more out of a man than ten hours in the fresh country air, as was proved by the fact that the town working people did not live nearly so long as the country labourers. Civilisation, Mr. Eminson thought, was of two kinds, true and false. True civilisation con-

sisted in the steady absorption of knowledge—religious, social, and educational—tempered with the power of self-restraint, and its results were people healthy, strong, industrious, and not given to a constant round of pleasures, but fond of home and home life. False civilisation, on the other hand, consisted in an atmosphere of unrest and a constant unhealthy craving for excitement. Its effects were to produce an inordinate love of pleasure and self-indulgence which became the chief aim of existence, to the neglect of duty and of home life, and ended, in too many cases, in young men becoming damaged members of society, without energy or brain; perhaps drunkards also, or the devotees of gambling or gambling sports, and finally, the fathers of unhealthy children. These failings were by no means peculiar to the sons of working men; they were, he asserted, also too common in other classes.

Where, then, was a remedy to be found? One fact appeared patent to him: the generation had too far lost control over its children; the puritanic strictness of former days had been relaxed, and its virtues had slipped away with its horrors. Children were no longer beaten nor put into dark holes, but neither were they trained. They were too often left to the schoolmaster and their own devices, and good as his rule might be, it was not and never could be the backbone of true training. Again, education in their villages was not altogether of the right kind. He only knew one school in his neighbourhood where any attempt had been made to teach the children a love of nature, by providing them with garden plots, helping them to produce flowers &c., and after a measure of success had been attained, that solitary experiment was allowed to drop. School teaching in country districts should, in his opinion, be adapted to country life.

Turning to another subject, Mr. Eminson pointed out that a very real grievance under which agriculture suffered was, that the burden of the maintenance of the rural highways fell chiefly on the farmers. In this, up to recent times, there was some show of fairness, as the farmers were the

chief users of them, although it seemed hardly just that the British husbandman's produce should have to pay highway and other rates, while the foreign husbandman's produce was excused its proportion of these expenses. This appears to me most true, and the point is one which I have dealt with in 'A Farmer's Year,' page 131; nor, although the question has been a good deal discussed, have I heard any convincing answer to the arguments which I there advanced.

To return, Mr Eminson pointed out that, whatever may have been the case in the past, of late years the country highways had come into renewed use by the towns, which pour out increasing streams of cyclists, tradesmen's carts, brewers' drays, motor vehicles, and, he might have added, traction engines, that pound them to dust in summer and mud in winter. Yet these towns contributed little or nothing to their upkeep. He added that another crying want of the farming industry was union amongst farmers themselves for their common good. Only by union could they hope to gain the ear of legislators. Almost every other class combined for self-protection, but the great farming Interest was left practically voiceless.

The consequence was that Parliament, finding the agricultural Interest dumb at the polling booths, shelved the whole matter, or flung a money bribe to the farmers in the shape of the repayment of half their rates; a dole which left the sores wholly unhealed, but irritated the townspeople who helped to find the money. Farmers should, he thought, cease to be mere party politicians, and in doing so become more patriotic Englishmen, determined to be heard, and prepared to vote for men of either party who would honestly grapple with rural questions, without that horrid admixture of party spite and insincerity which was characteristic of so many politicians of the present day. Scores of questions affecting farmers awaited settlement by Parliament, such as, for instance, the wringing of just rates and increased conveniences from the railway companies. Local unions of farmers should also deal with the urgent matter of the sale

of their produce in towns to the best advantage. They might, with great profit, employ their own salesmen, who would search out the good markets and give early information from cities as to their prevailing demands.

Mr. Eminson's views, of which I have given a summary above, seem to require no comment, except that they appear to me to be well reasoned and the result of experience and accurate information. Better housing, better and more suitable training for the young at home as well as in school, cultivation of the love of nature, the removal of unjust burdens on the land, combination of the classes connected with it to force attention to their grievances, co-operation among farmers—how desirable are all these things, not only in Lincolnshire, but throughout England! But how many of us will live to see them, I wonder, in this trade-ridden, city-worshipping land?

In a letter which he writes me, Mr. Hill, the vicar of North Somercotes, Lincolnshire, says: 'The bodily, mental, and even spiritual salvation of Englishmen as a mass depends, I believe, on the revival of rural life.' Strongly put again; but who that has studied this question can say that it is not true?

Most unfortunately I was unable to visit Spalding, which lies fourteen miles south of Boston, and inspect its famous small-holdings; an omission which, I fear, gave some offence. As, however, my stay in other parts of Lincolnshire took me longer than I expected and I had engagements ahead which could not be postponed, I was forced to omit the district and to comfort myself with the reflection that its general conditions are, I understand, not unlike those which prevail around Wainfleet and in the Isle of Axholme, neighbourhoods which I have described at some length. Mr. J. H. Diggle, however, of Moulton Spalding, steward to the Willow Tree Farm Syndicate and the Norfolk Small-Holdings Association, and the author of a pamphlet on Earl Carrington's experiments in small-holdings, has most kindly prepared for me a statement of the system on which small-holdings are

managed in Lincolnshire and Norfolk. The Norfolk group at Whissonsett, by the way, I have visited in his company, and shall describe when I treat of that county.

Mr. Diggle's outline of this scheme is so clear and should prove so valuable to any individuals or societies who wish to imitate it in other counties, that I make no excuse for printing it in full. If further evidence is needed of the power of these holdings on the Earl of Carrington's estate and elsewhere in keeping its population on the land, I may quote that of Mr. J. J. Chilvers, secretary of the Provident Allotments Club, who writes:—

Many instances have come within my observation of young men who, during the exodus a few years back from the land, would have remained if they could possibly have obtained allotments. Now that they can see there is a possibility of their becoming allotment holders, they choose to stop with us. We have a large proportion of young men in the Club, some of whom are waiting until they are twenty years of age for the right to ballot for land. It is a fact that not an empty cottage is to be had in Spalding Common. Indeed, we need more cottages badly.

Mr. Diggle writes to me as follows:—

Co-operative Small-Holdings in Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

The problem of placing agricultural labourers and village artisans on the land, or of giving the many access to land which the few only could obtain under ordinary economic conditions, has been solved in an interesting way in South Lincolnshire and Norfolk.

There are three main factors in the scheme. (1) A syndicate of gentlemen interested in promoting small-holdings; (2) the agricultural population desiring land; and (3) the Provident Allotments and Small-Holdings Club. The function of the syndicate is to provide, either by purchase (as in Norfolk) or hire (as in South Lincolnshire) land suitable for allotments and small-holdings in the neighbourhood of agricultural towns and villages.

The function of the Provident Allotments Club is to provide the tenants for the land. Anyone desirous of land joins the Club, keeps up his subscription (8s. or so per month), and when land is available makes application. The syndicate, as landlord

or as principal tenant, lets or sublets land to members of the Club only. When land is to be let the syndicate steward places himself in communication with the officials of the Club, a meeting of members is called, applications are received, and the land is let according to the demand. Almost invariably the demand exceeds the supply, and the size of the lots has to be reduced or the plots let by ballot.

The part played by the Allotments Club is important. The provident men are soon discovered through the regularity with which they pay their subscriptions. The members of the Spalding Common Club have passed a resolution requiring each member to retain a sufficient sum to his credit to cover a half-year's rent of the first and second acres, and a quarter of a year's rent for the third, fourth, and fifth acres occupied. The sum so retained is to provide a guarantee fund, to indemnify the syndicate in the event of the loss of rent upon land let to the members of the Club. The syndicate is thus enabled to allow the Club a free hand to nominate tenants according to simple rules; and practically the land is open to all members of the Club.

For some time it has been suggested that a credit Bank should be formed with the accumulated subscriptions as a capital fund. Mr. Charleton, vice-president of the Agricultural Organisation Society, has promised to attend a meeting with that object in view. The credit Bank is to be followed, it is hoped, by a Co-operative Agricultural Society. The funds of the Spalding Provident Allotments Club now amount to about £150. The three Provident Allotments Clubs in Norfolk have been established a comparatively short time. Members are paying in regularly, and it is intended that these also shall lead up to credit Banks.

The syndicates are represented by a steward and surveyor (Mr. J. H. Diggle, of Moulton), whose business it is to survey the farms and apportion the land in accordance with the demand and the applications, to prepare a schedule of rents according to the quality of the land, to receive the rents half-yearly or yearly, as the case may be, and to prepare a yearly balance sheet and report of the working of the farms. The steward's duty is, further, to keep an eye on the management of the tenants and to promote, as far as possible, co-operation and good cultivation.

The agreement made between the syndicate and the tenant is similar to those in use in the respective counties, but simplified and understandable by the tenant. Special clauses require the tenant to be and remain a member of the Village Allotments Club,

and not to underlet his allotment or small holding, nor do anything injurious to any adjacent small-holding. The tenant also covenants 'to cultivate and manage the land in a good and husbandlike manner according to the custom of the county, and is not to grow more than two white straw crops in succession &c.' The syndicate (the landlord) reserves the right to let the shooting rights over the lands, the profits to be distributed amongst the tenants according to the acreage occupied.

The rates are usually paid by the syndicate in one sum in the first instance, and recovered from the tenants *pro rata* at the rent audit. The work of trimming hedges, cleaning out ditches, &c. is sometimes undertaken by the syndicate and the cost fairly distributed; but where possible this work is done directly by the tenant, the syndicate steward supervising.

The rents of the farms, if purchased, are fixed to cover a moderate rate of interest on the purchase-money *plus* the capital cost of adapting the farm for small-holdings—*i.e.* surveying, fencing, gates, subdivision of buildings, &c.—and a small annual charge for management expenses. Thus farms in the neighbourhood of villages or towns are subdivided into 'accommodation' lots and let at a rental of not more than 10 or 15 per cent at the most in excess of the rental that the farm would realise if let as a whole. Needless to say the competition for small fields near villages in the open market forces up the rents to exorbitant figures.

The tenants, *i.e.* the allotment and small-holders, are chiefly agricultural labourers who work during the greater part of the year for neighbouring farmers. The working blacksmith and carpenter, and the small shopkeeper who needs straw and keeping for his pony, are also eligible provided they are members of the Club.

The proportion of agricultural labourers belonging to the Provident Allotments Clubs and occupying land varies. At Spalding Common, on Earl Carrington's estate, the great majority of the tenants are 'sons of the soil', at Whissonsett in Norfolk, on the other hand, practically the whole village has an occupation interest in the farm, the tenants including the labourer who worked for the retiring farmer, the village shopkeeper, carpenter, innkeeper, the farmer's son living at home, the assistant overseer, and the industrious son of the parish churchwarden!

The movement at Spalding Common was initiated nearly ten years ago by Mr. R. Winfrey, of Peterborough, formerly chairman of the Small-Holdings Committee of the Holland County Council,

and now chairman of the Spalding and Norfolk Small-Holdings Syndicates referred to.

Earl Carrington has offered land whenever farms on his estate were available, and at the present time the Spalding Syndicate leases 650 acres of his lordship's land, one farm being on a twenty-one years' lease. The farms are divided into holdings varying in size from a rood to twenty-five acres, and in one instance to forty-two acres. The number of tenants is about 200. During the ten years the rent lost has not exceeded one per cent. of the total sum. Apart from the above co-operative movement the demand for small-holdings in South Lincolnshire is very great. The land is very good here, and the number of labourers, farm foremen, &c. who have saved a little money (£20 to £100) is considerable. There is the keenest competition for holdings comprising house, buildings, and from twenty to forty acres of land, particularly if a fair proportion is grass.

Another association which deserves some mention, both because of what it has achieved and the example which it sets, is the Lincoln Equitable Co-operative Industrial Society, Ltd. Summed up in a few words its history seems to be as follows. A joiner named Thomas Parker, a native of Gainsborough, established the Society in 1861, its original members paying 1s. entrance fee and 3d. weekly, until sufficient capital was accumulated to start the business, which after some fluctuations increased steadily. A number of branches have now been opened in distant villages, which supply most commodities to the members. A feature of the method followed is that much of the trade consists of the exchange of one class of goods for another. In other words it is carried on under the primitive system of barter. Thus groceries, drapery, boots, bread, &c. are given in return for farm produce, a very large business being done in this way. In a report issued during the present year it is stated that

the total amount received for goods sold during the 161st quarter, ending January 1, 1902, is £57,602 17s. 11d., being an increase over last quarter of £649 3s. 7d. The net profit on the quarter's business, including £20 15s. 3d. brought forward from last quarter, is £6,766 11s. 10d., which sum will allow £1,807 3s. 1½d. as in-

terest, £4,050 as dividend, being 1s. 6d. in the £ on members' purchases, and £24 13s., being 8d. in the £, on purchases of non-members, £327 4s. 6d., being 2½ per cent. per annum, for depreciation of branch and cottage property; £251 5s., being 10 per cent., depreciation of fixed stock, £48, being 5 per cent., depreciation of milling plant, £20 for Congress Fund, £77 7s. 3d. for educational purposes, £15 for Workmen's Insurance Fund, and £145 18s. 11½d. carried forward to next quarter. Two hundred and three persons have joined the Society within the quarter, 147 have withdrawn, and twenty-eight forfeited, making the present number 10,186, an increase over last quarter of twenty-eight.

The general advance of the Society between the years 1891 and 1901, which is attributed to its having sold goods for a moderate profit, and provided meanwhile within itself a means of investment for all the savings and accumulated dividends which members have elected to entrust to it, is shown by the following table :—

1891				1901			
		£				£	
Sales		175,662		Sales		230,067	
Profit		19,001		Profit		24,685	
Reserve Fund . .		3,746		Reserve Fund . .		7,285	
Assets		110,944		Assets		216,660	

In addition to its trading ventures the Society has two small farms, one at North Hykeham, which belongs to it, and one called the Vicarage and Greff Hall Farm, that I think is hired, both of which appear to have been very successful until the bad year of 1901, when there was a loss on the latter of £118 15s. Of course the success of such Societies, which under good conditions are undoubtedly very beneficial to their members, depends upon their management. So far as I can judge from the documents and from the published results, in the case of the Lincoln Co-operative Society this appears to have been excellent.

Here I must close my account of the agricultural conditions of Lincolnshire. Short as it is, considering the area

dealt with, it may suffice to show how varied are the conditions which prevail in this great county.

It is impossible to speak of Lincolnshire as an agricultural whole, since it can only be judged in districts. Thus, in the dry season of 1901 the lowlands were, in my opinion, prosperous, whereas the higher country had suffered very much; but doubtless in wet and sunless years like that of 1902, the tale reads otherwise. On the whole, however, I fear that the balance is on the wrong side.

In Lincolnshire sheep are everywhere, on the high land and the low, and the ruinous fall in the price of wool, together with the closing of the South American ports, are shocks, coming as they do on the head of many others, which the agriculture of this county finds it very difficult to bear. In fact, unless some unforeseen change occurs here, as in other places, it is impossible to look to the future without the gravest apprehensions. We may hope for better things, but we can scarcely expect them, especially in view of the high price of store-cattle and the low value of beef, which smite the grazing interest hip and thigh, particularly in seasons of short rainfall and deficient pasture.

Still the grower of potatoes, and notably of early potatoes, was happy in 1901; and, as I have said, Marsh and Fen had no reason to complain—at any rate so far as the arable interests were concerned. Labour also was fairly plentiful that year throughout the county. It must be remembered, however, that a large proportion of this labour is Irish, and that in this part of England, as in others, the stream is drying at its source. Without doubt the young folk are everywhere leaving the land, and what the end of this will be must be told by some wiser man.

Hundreds of times have I put that question to experienced persons in the many counties I visited, but as yet I have received no satisfactory answer.

LEICESTERSHIRE, RUTLAND, AND NOTTINGHAM

MAKING my centre at Melton Mowbray I investigated thence the agricultural conditions of Leicestershire, Rutland, and Nottingham, which three counties, as they lie together and have much in common, I purpose to deal with in one chapter. The inland shire of Leicester has an area of about 528,000 acres—as to its exact extent there is the usual divergence among the authorities within my reach—with a length of thirty-nine miles from north to south, and thirty-eight miles from east to west. It is well watered by a number of rivers, and is one of the greatest grazing counties in England. Among its principal agricultural interests is that of the manufacture of Stilton cheese, of which I shall give a short description. It is also noted as a hunting county, being the home of the Quorn, Billesdon, and other packs. Directly and indirectly this sport brings a great deal of money into the shire.

Rutland is the smallest county in England, having an area of about 97,000 acres only. Here, too, there is much grazing, and Stilton cheese is manufactured. Also roots and cereals are grown, especially barley.

Nottinghamshire, which is bordered on the south and south-east by Leicestershire, covers about 539,000 acres, whereof no fewer than 200,000 are in permanent pasture. It is egg-shaped, and measures fifty miles in length from north to south, by a breadth at its widest point, of twenty-five miles. Only 39,000 acres were under wheat in 1901 and 38,000 in barley, but there is a good deal of dairying and mixed farming. The county is remarkable for its dryness,

much of the rain which would otherwise fall there being attracted by the highlands of Yorkshire and Derbyshire

Travelling from Grantham to Melton Mowbray I observed that, as in Northamptonshire, all the thousands of acres of pasture land through which we passed, as the ridge and furrow showed us, had been under the plough at some time unknown. The roads also have nearly all of them edgings of turf, left there, I presume, for the convenience of hunting men cantering to and from the meets. Cornfields were rare, and some of the oats almost worthless, but on the pastures, which were of mixed size and very irregular in shape, grazed many sheep and cattle.

Mr. G. W. Brewitt, who resided in Melton Mowbray and gave me much valuable assistance during my stay in that town, farmed between 400 and 500 acres in Great Dalby, about two miles away, where the soil is mixed, with some feeding land. He told me that the local farmers were fairly prosperous, and that the cheese-makers were generally small men who had to work very hard. The Belvoir Vale, which I believe contains about twenty villages, is the great cheese district; and here, he said, the land commanded a good price because of its suitability for the manufacture of Stiltons. The small farms, Mr. Brewitt informed me, were much more highly rented than the large, and brought in from 35s. to 40s. an acre. I gathered that the more considerable holdings averaged from 15s. to £1 or over, Mr. Brewitt paying, I think, £1 1s. for his, of which two thirds were good grass. The cheese-making was, he said, best done by the small people, who could give those whom they employed constant personal attention. These folk were very eager to take land, and there was a great demand for small-holdings of all sorts.

Labour which two years before had been very short was in 1901 in comparatively good supply, owing, I gathered, to slackness of trade in the towns. Thus Mr. Brewitt remarked that on the day following our first interview he was going to thresh, and never remembered having so many applicants for the job. The youths, he added, however, were

departing. 'They all leave the land' He said that fee simple values had fallen much. Thus his father, who did very well at farming in the good days, bought land in the sixties at £52 an acre, which same land was repurchased by Mr. Brewitt in 1884 at £16 the acre. He mentioned also a small farm which had been sold somewhere about 1870 for £13,000; and since the bad times was sold again for £4,500 or £5,000, nor did he seem to think that this terrible drop in values was anything unusual. Ten years before, however, there had been farms seeking tenants, but in 1901 this was not the case; which is a good sign so far as it goes. The year 1900 was good in Leicestershire, but in 1901 the cattle were starving, and although fat beef fetched a fair price, the difficulty was to get it fat. The price of wool he described as shocking; personally he had made 7*d.* a pound.

From Billesdon to Market Harborough was, Mr. Brewitt said, all feeding land where Scotch, Welsh, Hereford, and Shorthorn cattle were grazed. To the west the soil was brashy: this is known as the 'forest side' of the county. The cream of the Leicestershire pasture lay, he considered, between Melton and Syston, where it was all feeding land; and the worst in the neighbourhood of Lowesby, a poor district that was given up to dairying and small occupations.

Driving with Mr. Brewitt through Kirby and Frisby, we passed along the valley of the Wreak, which is called the Eye at Melton Mowbray and further on, the Soar, and flows into the Trent, that in turn flows into the Humber. This vale of Wreak is some of the richest land in the county. The cattle that we saw there were nearly all heifers and cows which are bought in by the farmers at about £12, and sold out fat at from £16 to £20. Much of the land is in ancient ridge and furrow, and I was very interested to come across a field half of which was being ploughed in ancient *∞*-shaped furrows, while the other half of it was in the ordinary, straight furrow. On inquiring the reason of this anomaly I was informed that it was because the crooked furrows followed the drains which

had originally been laid in the old *s* lands. Yet if this were so why was half of the field under straight furrows?

Mr. R. H. Astill, of Kirby Park Farm, whom we saw, farmed 113 acres here of very good land, fattening about 90 heifers and cows annually, as well as 100 sheep, with the help of but a little cake. Mr. Astill said that cottages were scarce in that neighbourhood, and so was labour, and added, pointing to a big iron foundry some miles away, 'They go there.' He employed one man and a boy, the man, who paid the high rent of £6 a year for his cottage, receiving 15s. a week.

He informed me that 1900 was a good season, and they did well, and that in 1901, although they had been short, they had not really suffered, except from the low prices. The story in this district seemed to be that the poorer, land large farms had been split up and let to working-men farmers. The better class of farmers would only take fat grazing lands; consequently the poor land went to poor men, who were glad to get it and managed to make a living, mostly out of the grass which generally covers about half of the area. Thus in 1896 a small-holder who had been long in his employ and had two sons, was helped by Mr. Brewitt to hire part of a little farm of seventy-six acres. Gradually they took up the remainder of the land, which was neither good nor bad, but very heavy, and now had it all with the exception of a single field.

On this man's farm the wheat was estimated to return four quarters to an acre, and both the oats and roots were a good crop. There were four red Shorthorn cows in milk, some young stock, thirteen ewes, and twenty lambs; also a horse took a leading prize at the Melton Mowbray Show, and had since been sold at a good figure. Thus it will be seen that this man and his sons, although they were obliged to work so hard, had attained to a position of honourable independence, and were doing well on their forty acres of arable and thirty-five of grass. It was this farm, I believe, that was bought by Mr. Brewitt's father for £52 an acre, and again by himself at £16 the acre. The average rent here was

about 15s. for land, some of which was good and some bad. The small-holders, however, paid up to £1 an acre. That the soil can be very productive is shown by the fact that on a field in the occupation of Mr Brewitt, which, I think, was pointed out to me, not far from Melton, he raised in 1894 a crop of wheat that gave the amazing return of eight quarters of saleable corn, two quarters of tops and offal, and two tons of straw to the acre. This wheat was grown after clover, the land being steam-ploughed, cultivated to a fine tilth, and the seed drilled very early. The cropping course here seemed to be (1) a bare fallow, (2) wheat, (3) seeds or part seeds or mangold, (4) oats.

Mr. Brewitt's foreman said that the labour was inferior, as the men either could not or would not work. Casual labour was procurable near the towns--this may have accounted for the number who applied for a day's work at a threshing—but away in the country it was very scarce and bad; nor would the young ones learn the business. Mr. Brewitt added that he did not know what they were coming to, as they seemed to be left with the old men, the cripples, and the dullards.

Mr. G. S. Wells, whom we saw at Ab-Kettleby, who was, I understood, Chairman of the Board of Guardians and of the Assessment Committee of the Melton Union, told me that the district had not suffered so much as others, as he thought, because of the dairying, by which he meant the cheese-making. This statement, however, did not apply to the arable land, of which few parishes had more than 10 per cent., and some had none at all. In the winter time, when they did not make cheese, these dairy people sent their milk to the towns, and in some instances to London. Small-holdings were in great demand, and any number of them could be let to working men, who made them pay by dint of hard labour; also there were many small freeholds. The rent ran as high as 50s. an acre. They had scores—he might almost say hundreds—of little holdings in the dairying villages, but none of that sort and size fetched less than

£2 the acre. Large farms on which there was a proportion of arable were let at about £1 an acre, and some as low as 15s. High as they still remained, the rents had fallen: thus the 50s land used to make £3. One place in Ab-Kettleby fetched £3, but then was hired at under 50s, and another which brought in £100 had fallen to £80 a year.

The very best cheese kept up its price fairly well. It used to sell for 1s. 3d per pound, and in 1901 brought in 1s., though much of inferior quality only made from 6d. to 9d. a pound. All round Melton there were a great many freeholders, some of whom had inherited and some had bought their land. These pasture lands, which commanded 50s. an acre rent, would sell at from £40 to £60 the acre. Thirty-six years before he had known them to fetch £80 or £90 an acre. Thus of one place he made £100 an acre which if it were resold, he did not think would fetch £50. Many of these small places were much mortgaged, up to half their value, or even more, but still a man he knew had made enough out of eighty-five acres to buy the farm and build a new house.

Large farmers could not make money of cheese because the people they employed were not always conscientious. Cheese must be made either by small-holders or by factories. The owners of these factories had done well, but none of them were on the co-operative principle. Mr. Wells said, however, that he had no doubt but that there was scope for co-operation and that it would pay. Labour was their difficulty, as there they had ironstone works which took many of the men. Still, these works helped at harvest, as perhaps at a rush half a score of men would come to a farm on Saturday afternoons. Generally, however, the labourers were very unsatisfactory and expensive. They did less work than formerly, and had no conscience or interest in their tasks. It was a question of how much they could get in return for as little work as possible.

Mr. Wells told me that very few of the young men took to the land, as there was a prejudice amongst them against agricultural work, so they went into other industries.

Farmers were being left with the old men only, although in that district there were many who, from the position of labourers, had risen to the occupation of nice places. Thus one of his own men had eighty acres full stocked, the result of hard work and a good wife. Mr. Wells farmed about 200 acres, of which sixty were arable; which seems to be a good-sized holding for this part of Leicestershire, where there are more farms under than over 100 acres. He used to make cheese, but owing to the ill-health of Mrs. Wells he had given up its manufacture. For many years they sold their cheeses to the same dealer, who sent all of it to Germany, where there exists, or existed, a small but good market. Stilton cheese has the advantage of being peculiar to one district, and therefore suffers little from competition; for a while, Mr. Wells said, the Gorgonzola did compete with it, but this rivalry seems to have diminished.

Mr. Wells grazed cattle and sheep. He said that he was tired of the Lincoln Longwools, and kept Shropshires crossed with Hampshire rams. His experience was that fat Lincoln sheep could not be sold to any advantage, as now-a-days quality was what was needed. He kept a small dairy also and fed on his calves for stores, which up to that time he had found to sell very well. Mr. Wells considered that the farming outlook was not very encouraging, although he did not know that it was worse than it had been for some years past. Foreign competition and low prices were hard to fight against. He thought that the medium-sized farmer suffered more than either the big or the small man. As compared with those of the large holder his expenses were higher, since with the machinery which he did not possess, four men could do the work of ten. As compared with the quite small-holder the position was much the same, since these little people had the advantage of paying no wages, all the labour being done by themselves or their families; whereas the medium-sized farmer must employ a certain number of hands who took away his profits.

Driving through the village of Ab-Kettleby we saw the

occupations of several small-holders, which seemed to average about forty acres each. Also we passed the highly cultivated farm of Mr W. H. Smith, jun., who, unfortunately, was from home. His wheat looked exceptionally well. Next we came to the farm of Mrs Musson, of Wartnaby, who held 300 acres at a rent of 23s 6d., and was famous for her Stilton cheeses, of which, at the time of my visit, she was making two a day.

This is the process of the manufacture of Stilton, as Mrs. Musson was so kind as to show and describe it to us. First, the milk that came from Shorthorn cows—which she considered the best for the purpose, although some makers keep other breeds of cattle—was strained or ‘sieved’ into a big tin vat, where it stood until it had cooled down to 80°. At this temperature the rennet is put in, which coagulates the milk and turns it into curd. As to the amount of rennet necessary to this end there seems to be no fixed rule—at least Mrs Musson said that in this matter she was guided by experience. When the curd is ready it is ladled out with a big scoop into straining-cloths, which are placed over a curd sink, the whey, which is used for pig-food, running into a cistern outside the chamber. Here the curd remains to ripen in the surplus whey for a length of time which depends on the weather and other conditions. When the weather is hot it would, I was informed, mature in about forty-eight hours, the cloths meanwhile being tightened from time to time.

After this the curd was broken up, and salt having been added to the amount of 7 lbs. or 8 lbs. to 25 lbs. of curd, the whole is put into a ‘hoop’ with holes in it, but neither top nor bottom, through which the whey drains. In these hoops it stands for seven or eight days, the whole mass being turned each day. Occasionally, also, skewers are driven into the hoops to assist in ridding them of the whey. On the seventh or eighth day it is slipped out of the hoop and invested with a binder or cloth, which is changed every day for another eight days or so, the cheese being turned at

the same time. When the binder cloths are found to be quite dry upon the cheese, the use of them is discontinued. By this time the cheese should have assumed that wrinkled appearance with which we are familiar in Stilton. It is then moved into a coating room (which must be kept damp and have a cool draught of air passing through it), where, Mrs. Musson^s said, it remains for a week or more, and the surface acquires its light grey colour. After this it is transferred to the storeroom, that should be damp and dark, where it is turned and brushed daily for a period of about six months, during which time it sinks from 18 lbs. to 14 lbs. or 15 lbs. in weight.

Now, if all things have gone right, it should be a perfect Stilton cheese and ready for eating. One of the first requisites of this making of Stilton cheeses—of which Mrs. Musson remarked that, with the exception that they made no noise, they were more trouble than babies—is that all the rooms wherein they stand during their manufacture, and everything that touches them, must be kept scrupulously clean. Another is that the temperatures must be carefully watched, and not allowed to rise too high or fall too low. So far as I could discover, it takes about five quarts of milk to make 1 lb. of curd, and 25 lbs. of curd to make a ripe Stilton of 15 lbs. weight. In August, when I was in Leicestershire, the yield of curds was good; but Mrs. Musson said that it had been bad early in the season. She continued to make cheeses up to the middle of November, but informed me that when the frost came the curd began to go back in quality. The finished cheeses she disposed of to factors, or at the fairs at Melton Mowbray and Leicester. I gathered that the best price was obtainable from the factors, who, however, made a habit of picking their cheeses, and leaving those that were inferior to be disposed of otherwise. It should be added that the excellence of the cheese depends greatly on the quality of the grass land on which the cows are fed.

According to William Marshall, who wrote in 1790, a

certain Mrs. Paulet, who was still living at that date, first made this cheese at Wymondham in the Melton quarter of Leicestershire. Her cheese was sold by Cooper Thornhill, who kept the Bell Inn at Stilton in Huntingdonshire, whence it acquired its name. Afterwards the manufacture spread to Dalby and many other villages in Leicestershire, and now it is also common in Nottinghamshire and Rutland. In William Marshall's time its price seems to have been much what it is at present, viz from 10*d.* to 1*s.* a pound.

Besides her cheese-making, which she described as 'the work of the house,' Mrs. Musson carried on the business of a general farmer on a somewhat extensive scale, rearing calves, growing corn, &c. After leaving her farm we drove into the Vale of Belvoir, the home of small-holders. Here was grass field after grass field of every size, some of them covering not more than three quarters of an acre, and on them many Red cattle. All, or nearly all, of these showed the ridge and furrow, and were bordered with wide hedges, having many gaps made by the hunters and filled in with posts and rails. Here we saw but very little arable.

Passing through Nether Broughton we came to Upper Broughton in Nottinghamshire, where the soil is a stiff clay with a clay subsoil, and the pasture good. Here we saw Mr. George Copley, who farmed sixty acres, none of which was arable, at a rent of 38*s.* an acre, and who had, I was informed, worked his own way up to his present position. Mrs. Copley told me that the making of cheese was very hard work, as it must be attended to on Sundays as well as week-days; also that they could just make a living out of it and no more. She said that they hired no labour, and that she had a large family, but that her daughter, who was twenty-one, was a great assistance to her; also they had two sons who helped. Mrs. Copley took us to her cheese-rooms where she was engaged in breaking up the curd of the day before, for insertion into the 'roll'—that is, the hoop, by hand. First the salt was mixed in, then the roll was filled

and piled up above the brim, to the level of which Mrs. Copley said it would sink in two hours.

While we were talking to her Mr Copley came in from a field where he had been at work 'helping a neighbour.' It is, I have noticed throughout England, the small-holder who is most ready to help his neighbour, as it is the small-holder who is most willing to co-operate. Mr Copley kept twenty cows, all of which were calved down in the spring, and bought milk as well, his only other stock being pigs. In winter when no cheese was made he sent his milk to Nottingham and to London, selling it to a collector. His cows were Shorthorns, but he said that a cross did no hurt. In winter they received hay and cake. He informed me that if it were not for the cheese the rents could not be made, especially upon places of that size. He had never occupied any land that would not produce cheese, but there was some in the county off which the quality made was inferior. This matter of quality did not depend upon the richness of the pasture, as Stiltons made on poor land were as fine as the Stiltons made from good, the only requisite being that the milk should be up to a certain standard, which if necessary could be insured by the help of cake.

He used basic slag upon his land at the rate of 5 cwt. to the acre, and found that it produced splendid crops. Fields in that neighbourhood had, he said, gone down to grass of themselves, and with management come into good pasture; indeed, he knew a man who was paying 30s an acre for a field which had laid itself down in this fashion. The question of labour was not one in which he was concerned personally, as he hired none, but he said that the larger farmers had a difficulty in getting men. The wages were about 18s. a week or more for day labour. Mr. Copley added that the young men went away.

Mr. James Worthington, of Broughton House, whom I visited next, held 300 acres, of which from forty to fifty were arable—a large farm for that district. On this land which he had farmed for eighteen years, he kept sixty-five cows,

all of them, I think, reared by himself; that in 1900 produced 140 dozen of cheeses. This great quantity of cheese was made by his wife with the help of two dairymaids, who received £15 to £16 a year, with food and lodging. His cows gave about two gallons of milk a day to start with, which sank by degrees to an average of a gallon. Of their calves he reared fifteen each year and sold the rest, making as much as £3 a head of some of them. The prevailing rents in that part of Nottinghamshire Mr. Worthington put at 30s. an acre for large farms, 35s. being an average for the smaller holdings in the village. The capital required, he said, was £10 an acre on feeding farms and £8 an acre on poorer land. Of arable there was not more than about 10 per cent.; indeed, in Upper Broughton the proportion was less. Nearer Nottingham, beyond which no cheese was made, there was, however, more arable. During the last few years he himself had laid a quantity of land down to grass.

The wages averaged, Mr. Worthington informed me, £1 a week, as without good pay the men would not remain. Indeed, he declared that they preferred anything to the land, and that he was badly off for milkers. Things had been like this for the past ten years or so, but he thought that the towns must become full in time. The making of cheese had kept up the price of rents, as small-holdings were always in good demand. As regarded profits, it should be remembered that the cost of labour and of rennet had to come off them, but the cheese districts were certainly more prosperous than the others, and in them were many occupiers. The price in 1900 was, he said, lower than it had been; indeed, few commodities fluctuated more in value than did cheese, but they expected to sell them well in 1901. Personally he had supplied the same dealer for twenty years.

At the time of my visit Mr. Worthington was making twelve cheeses a day, and his storeroom where they were arranged in rows was a sight to see. Here the cheeses were kept in the dark to prevent the flies from getting

to them, but it was the custom to set the windows open at night. Mr. Worthington said that it took seventeen gallons of milk to make a 15 lb cheese. This was a little higher than the estimate given by Mr. Copley, who thought that a gallon of milk produced a pound of cheese.

Mr. W. T. Humphreys, of Lowesby, whom I saw at Melton Mowbray, was, I believe, the hon. secretary there to the National Agricultural Union, and farmed 150 acres, all grass land. He said that he had a life-long experience of the business, and could not say that the farmers in the districts with which he was acquainted, were prosperous even on the grass lands, as the prices of all the produce which they had to sell were down, and of all that they had to buy were up. Thus, wool at the Leicester fair sold at 15s. 6d. a tod, whereas at the same fair, in past years, he had made as much as £3 3s. The sheep breeders often crossed the long-wool ewes with the Hampshire rams to get lambs for selling, but used Lincoln rams for the renewal of their flocks. Cheese paid better than anything else; indeed, it was the only thing that did pay; but it was very difficult to make, as its management varied much in accordance with the conditions of pasturage, climate, &c. Farms were taken up well, which was a puzzle to him, as farmers could make nothing more than a rent and a living, and there were cases in which the unfortunate among them vanished altogether.

The question of labour was, in his opinion, the blackest of all. The men would not milk—in fact, some people were giving up cows for this reason—and there were no odd hands to be had. In one village, I think he said his own, nearly all the young people had gone, and it was practically impossible to hire a boy or a girl. They went into the towns and on to the railways, and very few came back. He thought that education had much to do with this, and that in the end it would mean the depopulation of the rural districts. Yet the wages were very good—17s. a week, free house and garden, with extra for hay harvest and extra for every head of lambs, working out in all at

nearly 22s. a week. Much of the arable land had gone and was going down to grass, in his neighbourhood a ploughed field could only be seen here and there. One of the reasons for this was that pasture took but little labour—say a man and a lad to 100 acres. The rents, Mr. Humphreys stated, ranged from 25s. to 40s. the acre. In a letter which he wrote to me Mr. Humphreys said :

There is a great scarcity of labour in this neighbourhood, which is certainly the most serious question of the hour, especially as regards milkers, both men and boys. As for females, who of yore used to carry yokes and buckets or milk-pails on their heads—that is now quite out of the question. General labourers, all-round men, are mostly old and will soon be a thing of the past, as the young men will not stop on the land, though wages round here are good.

Mr. Henry Brett, of Bleasby Manor, in the south-east of Nottinghamshire, where he farmed 700 acres, whom I also saw at Melton Mowbray, told me that the Trent valley had suffered little from the drought of 1901. Generally, he said, in Nottinghamshire, where the corn was bad that year and the roots were good, it was not so severe as in the parts of Leicestershire around Melton. The strong lands, Mr. Brett said, were divided about equally between grass and arable, but the west of Nottinghamshire was nearly all plough, while in the Newark district a good deal of the arable had been sowed down.

The general position was one of chronic depression, and farmers as a whole were on a lower level than they used to be. Both rents and selling values had fallen about 40 per cent., except those of accommodation lands near towns. Labour, Mr. Brett informed me, was more plentiful in Nottinghamshire than it had been, but for the most part of a bad class. The young people went away, and it was common for lads to come on to a farm for a few years, then ask for their characters and depart. In conclusion Mr. Brett said that he did not take a favourable view of the prospects of

Nottinghamshire land and those who cultivated it, as the agricultural interest there was going steadily down the hill.

A well-known surveyor and auctioneer with a large business in these counties told me that the grazing and dairying neighbourhood in Rutland was in the west. The Stamford district, on the borders of Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire—that is, the north and east—was entirely arable, turnip and barley land for the most part. Round Lyddington and Uppingham, in the south, was much extremely good feeding land, and in the south-east some excellent arable soil. About Oakham, the capital of the county, the land was arable and pasture mixed. My informant thought that agriculture was not prosperous in Rutlandshire in 1901. In a good year Bass bought the barley grown in the eastern part of the county, but in 1900 the firm had taken little, and he feared that in 1901 it would not be good enough for them.

Also the grazing was very bad that season, although in the centre of the county, where there was more stiff soil, the crops would be better than elsewhere. Of the farmers he said that he could not put his finger on a man who had made money of late years, and many of them had been spending capital. Taking the average of the land, rents had fallen about 25 per cent since the good times. Arable alone had, however, come down 50 per cent.; but, on the other hand, the grass where cheese was made had not fallen at all, and the mixed farms only about 25 per cent.

In Rutlandshire 400 acres was a large farm, and such there was some difficulty in letting at from 25s. to 30s. an acre; but the small farms were well applied for, and fetched 40 per cent more than the big ones, as the little men, who depended upon their own labour only, paid a heavier rent. The pick of the feeding lands in the south of the county brought in from £2 to 50s., and the mixed farms from 15s. to 25s. an acre. Of the labour he said that he thought the exodus from the country very serious, as in Rutlandshire, as elsewhere, the young folk went away. Before they hired

a farm thinking men took this question of the scarcity of labour into consideration. The cottages in the county were good and sufficient, especially those on the estates of the large landowners, such as the Marquis of Exeter, Lord Ancaster, and Mr. Finch. Upon this last property there existed an ancient system of small-holdings, upon the three-acres-and-a-cow principle, under which the holder of cottage had with it a field of two or three acres and certain rights to pasture on the commonage.

On the subject of these small-holdings Mr. H. R. Finch, who acted, I understood, as his brother's agent, was so kind as to give me the following information.

The system of cottage holdings was introduced about a hundred years ago on the Builey Estate, and was copied by the late Lord Tollemache, who was brother-in-law of the late Mr. Finch. It is in force in the parishes of Burley, Egleton, Hambleton, and Greetham. In 1901 there lived in those parishes forty-three small occupiers, whose acreage varied from five acres to forty acres, the holdings being all grass. Originally there were many more, the Hambleton cow pasture, which is 102 acres in extent, being divided into eighty cow-commons. Some of the holders occupy two or more small fields, but the general system has been for the tenants to graze large fields in common, and to have separate small fields reserved for mowing hay for the winter. In the fields which are grazed in common five roods have been taken as being sufficient to keep a cow.

As to the future, my informant the auctioneer did not know what to say, except that everything looked bad, and the prices were very low; what prosperity they had was, he declared, largely owing to the hunting. In Oakham also town property sold well.

Mr. R. C. Cooper, of Waltham-on-the-Wolds, Melton Mowbray, who was, I understood, an Alderman of the county Council, said that many of the small men were doing badly, but that the man who worked his young cart-horses and sold them out at from £40 to £60, put money into his

pocket which helped him. Of the larger farmers some were making a living and some were not. He used to breed long-wool pedigree Lincoln sheep, of which he had sold as many as sixty in a year to Buenos Ayres buyers. Also he bred young stock, but stated that the low prices killed the industry. For labour they were not badly off, although the Ironstone works took a good deal of it. The cottages under the Duke of Rutland, who paid all rates, were good, but there were some others of which this could not be said.

Mr. Cooper did not consider that the outlook was bright for farmers, nor would he again invest £2,000 in stocking a farm—in fact were it not for his comfortable house he said that he should leave the business. There was not the demand for farms that there used to be, although, no doubt, they would let at the reduced rates, as a great many people were brought up to farming and could do nothing else. Some also thought that it was a nice, easy life, and, if they could just live, did not care about earning any interest on their capital. He feared that the export trade in sheep was a thing of the past, for he did not think that the Argentine would reopen its ports. He wished that he could take some brighter view of the prospect, but this he was not able to do. Mr. Cooper added that very little cheese was manufactured in his neighbourhood, although Mrs. Cooper made one a week for their own use.

Mr. Whittle, of the firm of Williamson & Whittle, auctioneers, of Leicester and Melton Mowbray, said that generally the prospect of prices in 1901 was bad. Farmers, he thought, were holding their own, but they were not moving on. It was a question of prices, not a question of rents. If they could make from 3s. to 4s. per head more for fat sheep, and 1½d. more per lb. for high-quality beef, it would give them a living profit; but the tendency of prices was to go lower. A further drop of 1d. per lb. on beef and 2d. per lb. on mutton would make it impossible for rents to be paid. There was much foreign meat sold in Leicester, and undoubtedly it was of splendid

quality. The rents of big farms up to 600 acres averaged from £1 to 25s., these large holders getting their land at about 50 per cent less than the small men, who had to pay £2 an acre. Mr. Whittle said that he was unable to take a bright view of the prospects of the local agriculture.

At Wyfordby, three miles from Melton Mowbray, which has only a population of about fifty souls, I visited the Rev. W. M. Ramsay, who had held the living for fifteen years. Mr. Ramsay told me that the young men and boys all went away, as they had a downright distaste to the land, and liked the company of the towns. The villages in that neighbourhood if agricultural were, he said, all decreasing in population. He thought that the exodus would grow worse and worse until there came some crash in the cities, but that if a plan could be hit on greatly to extend the number of the small-holdings in this grass country it would help very much to keep the people on the soil. The large farmers, he informed me, only made a poor living in that district, but sometimes the hard-working small men amassed a little money and were able to take a bigger holding. The rents of farms of from 200 to 300 acres he put at about 30s. an acre, and of holdings of from twenty to fifty acres at about 40s. an acre.

I walked over a good deal of land here, and found that it was nearly all grass. Mr. Ramsay took me to call on Mr. Green, a large farmer who lived in a beautiful and ancient house with curious underground passages, in a neighbouring parish. Unfortunately Mr. Green was from home, but Mrs. Green said that she did not think that farmers were doing well, and it was a very bad year. Owing to the drought they had eight tons of hay where they ought to have eighty, and as the cattle would not fat they were obliged to cake them all through the summer. This farm, which, I understood, rented at 35s. an acre, was all grass, so that it employed but little labour.

On another day I visited Melton Mowbray market, which is held on a Tuesday. Notwithstanding the depression of

which we heard so much, the scene was busy. Many farmers were gathered there, and there was a considerable quantity of stock on sale, including some horses.

The country in the neighbourhood of Melton is very pretty. On one perfect summer evening, which was so still that the dark foliage of the ash trees scarcely stirred in the breath of the wandering breeze, I walked at sunset to a rise a mile or two to the north of the town to rest and study the prospect. It repaid me well. Southwards and eastwards, far as the eye could reach, stretched the plains of Leicestershire. To the east lay some cornfields, where the yellow shocks stood grouped upon the stubble, and in the vale beneath a red-brick farmstead. Beyond the town of Melton, which was hidden by an intervening rise, rolled meadow upon meadow, each of them mapped out by trees. To the west was another wave of land, and sinking to it, the great ball of the sun covered with a network of cloud—a black sheet, lined with gold that would not be hid. Above floated fleeces of flame which, in the higher sky, faded to a snowy white and wandered across the vault of azure—like sheep upon some unbounded waste. To the east lowered a purple-crested storm cloud, that looked like a mountain range rising from the sea, to the south trails as of smoke, merging into a red and angry mist where the horizon met the distant lands. In all this expanse of country there was no one to be seen, for men had ceased from their labour, and the only sounds that I could hear were the beat of a horse's hoofs upon the hard road far away, the constant calling of hidden lambs, the lowing of a cow beyond the rise, and the noise made by sheep tearing at the sweet grass behind the hedge. Indeed, the scene was one of great peace and beauty.

From Melton to Leicester *via* Brooksby the railway runs along the valley of the Eye, through some of the best land in the county, past Rearsby, with its pretty, white Gothic church and red-brick houses with blue-slatted roofs. Here the rich pastures, among which the village lies low, looked strong and green, even in the last days of that dry August.

The pollard willows, poplars, and tall, wild fences gave an air of opulence to the landscape, which was heightened by the numerous herds of Red cattle and the comfortable houses that glowed in the sunlight. All along this valley churches are plentiful though small, but it is given up to grass, and of arable land I saw but little. In addition to the screens of poplars and willows, ash trees were common here. In the neighbourhood of the town of Syston the best feeding lands came to an end and the soil wore a red tinge. Some fallows on the hill also showed that the drought had killed the root plant. Near to Humberstone were many brick-works, and before reaching it market gardens, where, to judge from the number of hives beneath the fences, the bee industry is practised.

When we reached the great town of Leicester it was so crowded with people that in places we found difficulty in walking along the streets; a strange contrast indeed to many of the lonely countrysides which I had visited in the Midlands. Here I had the pleasure of an interview with Sir John Rolleston, M.P., President of the Surveyors' Institution. Sir John said that he thought the condition of agriculture in Leicestershire unprosperous. Seasons varied of course, but the crisis was one of prices. Wool, which used to fetch £2 2s. a tod, was down to 14s. or 15s., and wheat scarcely brought in what it cost to produce. Farmers were but just making a living, and some were spending capital. Rents, however, were going down, and more applicants came forward for farms than there had been. A few men did well, but he could count these on his fingers. Others were 'basting' their farms, that is, spending money on them out of pocket. Farms near a city like Leicester were really worth less than those that lay at a distance, owing to the constant nuisance of trespassers and the mischief which they did. For that reason there were 8,000 acres in the borough of Leicester which only fetched 25s. an acre.

The market gardeners were cut out by the competition of foreign produce, since the English towns did their shopping

in the marts of the whole world. Milk was alone excepted from this rule, but the production of milk meant constant labour, on Sundays as well as week days, and this was hard to find. The average fall in rents Sir John put at 25 per cent., but in some cases they had fallen 70 per cent. On one farm he knew in the Lowesby neighbourhood, the rent had sunk from 70*s.* an acre down to 32*s.* 6*d.*, a drop of more than 50 per cent.; in another from 50*s.* to 20*s.* Practically there was no selling, as nobody was buying as an investment. In many cases his firm had cut up a property and erected the necessary buildings in order to let it in portions to smallholders, but the experiment had not proved remunerative.

I asked Sir John if loans from Government would not help in this matter. He answered: Yes, but Government at that time was itself borrowing money at nearly four per cent. Also the land had no friends in Parliament to push through such a scheme. A great difficulty in Leicestershire, which was a manufacturing and a mineral county, was, he said, the question of labour, that became more acute every year. On his farm the average wage was 24*s.* a week, a sum he could not afford. Not only was the price of labour rising, but the men would not do their work. He saw no hope of the exodus from the land coming to an end. The matter looked like growing into a national crisis, as undoubtedly the town men had not the physique of those who were reared in the country.

I will supplement these opinions by a few very brief extracts from the opening address which Sir John Rolleston delivered on November 11, 1901, as President of the Surveyors' Institution. He said:—

The man of the country has a different story to tell. The wave of prosperity . . . has not only passed him by, but has left him wrecked among the shoals, and for his parlous state the man of the city has neither pity nor concern. . . .

I do not know that any of us could take three meals in a day at a metropolitan restaurant and be absolutely certain that any single article that we consumed, either of meat or drink, was produced from the soil of Great Britain or Ireland.

By way of comment on this statement I may remark that more often than not the traveller may be quite certain of the contrary. In the course of my extensive journeyings in England in 1901 I stayed in a good many hotels. With few exceptions—indeed almost always, if the town were of any considerable size—I found that the food was foreign and the waiters were German. In one Midland city I remember a pretentious and expensive meal was served, whereof every item on the long menu was evidently compounded of imported and very inferior food. Being unable to eat it I asked for some grouse, which, I reflected, must be of British origin. It came, and proved to be British indeed, but—British seagull, or perhaps curlew! On this point I, who have shot and cooked these strong-flavoured fowl, could scarcely be mistaken.

Sir John says again: 'I see no sign of progress. Indeed, I must confess having come to the conclusion that the prospects of British agriculture, so far as the production of food is concerned, are well-nigh hopeless.'

There is much more worthy of notice in his address, but unfortunately I have no space for further quotations.

Mr. H. T. Hincks, of the Leicester firm of auctioneers and surveyors, Messrs Hincks & Shakespear, a very prominent citizen of that town, and, as I understood, chairman the agricultural Committee of the Council of the county Borough, besides owning land in Lincolnshire, farmed 750 acres in Berkshire and from 200 to 300 in Leicestershire. Mr. Hincks said that he had a large agricultural auctioneering business in Lincolnshire and in and around Leicester, and, in his opinion, the general conditions had never been worse than they were in 1901. If he could make half what he did in business out of farming, that was the life which he would prefer; but, as a matter of fact, he had lost money at it ever since 1894. Since the nineties began but few farmers had made four per cent. on their capital, and to get on at all they must work hard and live low on what they produced. The small-holders must labour sixteen

hours a day, and not be 'Saturday night' men, but they were the only people who had made any money. Sometimes they saved £100 or so, but very rarely more.

Mr Hincks added he did not believe that farmers were below the average in intelligence, as was so often asserted. They might be slow, but they were sure. He said the labour was so bad and difficult that he had given up the milk trade. The wages he paid ran from 16s. to £1 a week, two of the men having gratis cottages &c. The average was perhaps £1 a week, including extras. At Wigston Magna he had not an agricultural labourer under seventy years of age, as they all went on to the railways. However, trade in Leicester was bad, with the result that there was much more labour in the market, and he thought that they had seen the worst of this question. Land would still let, especially to small people and to persons of the manufacturing classes who farmed for a hobby; but in twenty years of experience he only knew of two farms on which the rents had risen.

As to the future of agriculture, he was more despondent than he had been ten years before. He thought, however, that Protection would come in, as there was certainly a *tendency that way*. Thus in *Leicester America* was competing in the boot, shoe, and stocking trades, with the result *that the feeling in favour of Protection was increasing there*. In the course of our conversation Mr. Hincks made a remark which interested me very much. I commend it to the attention of medical experts. He said that the cancerous disease known as 'big jaw' was very common on the ranches in America, and was brought over with the imported stock. He believed that the eating of the meat which had been so affected was one of the great causes of the rapid spread of cancer among human beings in the present day.

At Leicester I had the pleasure of seeing two of the leading graziers in the county, Mr. Henry Burgess, of Middleton, Market Harborough, and Mr. W. H. Kendall, of Goadby. Both these gentlemen informed me that grazing was not a

profitable occupation, especially in dry seasons, as they were unable to compete with the American meat. At the best, graziers in Leicestershire could scarcely hold their own. It was impossible to produce beef at 6*d* a pound, and many had been obliged to look to sheep as their mainstay, but the price of wool was ruin. It had come to this, that they had to bolster up their farming businesses out of private capital. On grazing farms the question was rather one of rent than of labour, and to run them properly not less than from £15 to £20 an acre capital should be employed. This was no longer forthcoming. Both Mr. Burgess and Mr. Kendall said that they knew of no young men who were going into the business with capital, Mr. Kendall adding that if ten men with whom he was acquainted, who grazed 800 or 900 beasts apiece in Leicestershire, were to die or give up their farms, he did not think that anybody would be found to take them.

Some of the grazing land, however, Mr. Burgess pointed out, was being put to the purpose of dairying and milk production for London, with the result that its quality was unquestionably going back. Mr. Burgess said that he had no fault to find with the labour, and he thought that when the brick and iron factories became depressed the workmen would return to the land. Mr. Kendall, on the other hand, told me that where he lived they were all old men on the land, and one or other of them said that the young men who went to factories in the towns never came back, whereas those who migrated to the iron and brick factories, which were for the most part situated in the country, did come back when trade fell off.

Mr. Burgess believed that before long American meat would become dearer, as it would be cornered by the operators there, a view that does credit to his sagacity; seeing that in the year which has elapsed since he spoke this very thing has happened. South American meat, he remarked, was not of so good a quality, and could scarcely compete with the best English. Mr. Kendall, *per contra*, was of opinion that it would become cheaper rather than

dearer. Frozen meat, he said, will keep for an indefinite time, whereas our fresh meat will not. For this view also there is much to be said, seeing that the chilling of carcasses has now been brought to great perfection, and that 'corners' in meat and other products, are not likely to last for ever.

To my mind indeed it is doubtful whether the peoples of the world will continue to submit for any long period to the burden which is laid upon them by these immoral trusts and combinations that, American in their origin, are now spreading into other countries, whose object put briefly is artificially to enhance the price of necessaries in order that individual operators may reap enormous profits.

In conclusion Mr Burgess, who held 1,200 acres of grass and 800 of plough-land, said that farming was a played-out and hopeless business. Mr. Kendall, who held 800 acres of grass and generally fed between 200 and 300 cattle, also said that he considered it hopeless. He remarked that during the last ten or twelve years he had lost from £3,000 to £4,000 in farming, and that he had made up his mind not to part with more of his capital in this fashion. Before that happened he would go out of it, or at the least reduce his holding. This feeling, he added, was very general amongst graziers.

Subsequently to our interview Mr Henry Burgess wrote me an interesting letter, in which after consideration, he states his views clearly and concisely. It cannot be said that his conclusions, which are those of an experienced and thoughtful man, tend to raise the spirits of the investigator into the conditions of agriculture in the Midland Counties. The essential parts of this letter are as follows:—

I think your principal idea is to bring the wretched state of agriculture before the British public, so that they may judge for themselves whether our healthiest and oldest industry is to perish or not.

In this district undoubtedly our best grass lands have depreciated less than the ploughed land, but the decrease in value is considerable: this I attribute to the low price of meat and wool and to the fact that the seasons for the past eight or nine years have been decidedly bad for grazing.

Many will say that the price of store cattle suitable for feeding is too high, but one can scarcely think so, or the breeder and rearsers would be in a better position. The real fact is that the finishing price is too low, and except in very favourable seasons it is impossible to compete with the inferior meat from South America and the Australian mutton.

Owing to the low price of corn, near here a large amount of ploughed land has practically tumbled down to grass and weeds, and is nearly worthless, displacing a large quantity of labour which has gone to swell the increasing numbers in the overcrowded towns, a state of things, I fear, not confined to this district, for to keep the plough going except on the best light land simply means ruin, and many thousands of labourers must see that the cheap loaf is so only in name.

Now, sir, what can Parliament and the Board of Agriculture do for us? One small step in the right direction they have taken. I refer to the Agricultural Rates Act, and I look forward to the time, when the rating problem is thoroughly taken in hand, to a still further reduction, feeling sure that the people of this country will in all fairness see that personalty will be fairly taxed as against the land, which still pays in local rates far more than it should do.

Another step they should take is to see that the officials of the Board of Agriculture are practical men and not pitchforked into the positions they hold without due qualifications, as is too often the case now; hence insane orders &c., many of which are only troublesome and useless to prevent the spread of contagious diseases.

I fear the time is not yet ripe to even hint at Fair trade; yet I cannot see the sense in taxing articles of consumption which do not enter into competition with us and allow the surplus products of foreign countries to come in free to the ruin of the British farmers and labourers.

Speaking personally I occupy about 1,500 acres of land, of which 1,200 are grass, and having been farming from boyhood, can speak with some knowledge of the subject when I say that matters cannot go on as they are doing at present, and unless a substantial rise in prices does occur it will be most disastrous for owners, farmers, and labourers, as well as for the village tradesman and country life generally.

You will understand that a large amount of capital is required for our best grass land, as in many cases £20 per acre is not too

much to allow for stocking, and I think when this generation of farmers are either dead or have lost their capital—which seems only too probable—it will be well-nigh impossible to replace them, as very few young men are now being brought up to the industry which their ancestors have followed in many cases for generations.

I apologise for the length of this letter, which you are at liberty to deal with as you think best.

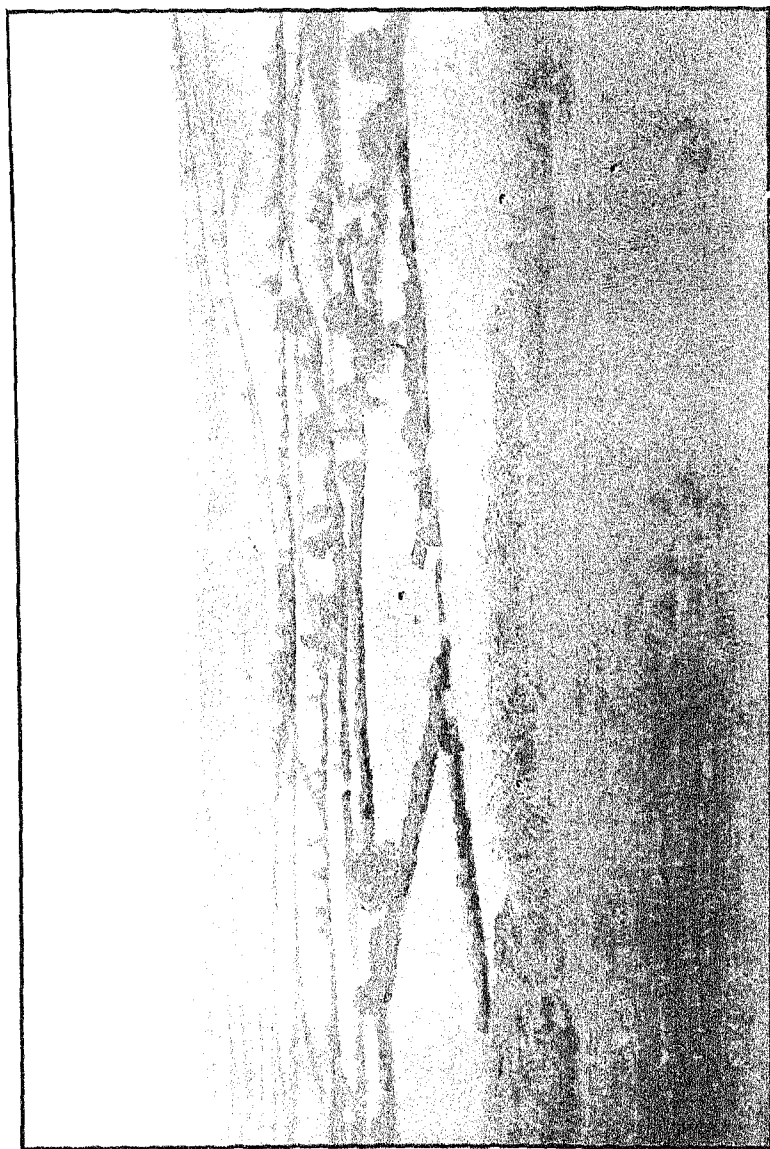
In the neighbourhood of Ashwell, which lies over the Rutland border between Melton Mowbray and Oakham, I saw much poor pasture land in large enclosures, a good deal of which evidently had gone down to grass at some recent period, intermixed occasionally with fields of cereals. About here the soil seemed to be a tough clay, and the country was rather heavily wooded with ash. On the pastures, which were very full of thistles, grazed many sheep. Oakham is an exceedingly pretty town with a picturesque butter-market where stand a curious pair of stocks. It is chiefly famous for its castle, an ancient building with beautiful Norman arches. In the hall of the castle, or perhaps it was the chapel, hang about 130 horse-shoes, some of them of large size and ornamental design.

According to a pamphlet written by Miss Margaret Finch, a certain de Ferrars, who was created Baron of Oakham by Henry II., originated the custom, under which every peer on his first passing through the town of Oakham is obliged to leave a shoe off his horse to be nailed on the castle gate, or of late generations, within its hall. In due course it was arranged that the duty might be compounded for by a sum of money, which was spent in manufacturing a horseshoe of a design to be approved by the donor. Now-a-days, when so many peers travel, not on horses, but in motor cars or even upon bicycles, this alternative has advantages. The tyre of a Panhard or other machine would scarcely add to the attractiveness of the walls of Oakham Castle. Among these horseshoes are specimens left by Queen Elizabeth, George IV., Queen Victoria, her present Majesty, and other historical personages. The effect of them all hanging to-

gether upon the wall is very curious, as indeed is the custom which accounts for their presence there. Its origin seems to be that an ancestor of de Fernars, who was master of horse to the Dukes of Normandy, bore arms which were 'semé of horseshoes'.

Our conductor in this neighbourhood was Mr Robert Bradshaw, of Eggleton, where Mr. G H Finch owns most of the land and is lord of the manor. He drove us through Burley-on-the-Hill past the seat of the Finch family, a mansion beautifully situated in the midst of charming scenery, which is said to have succeeded one that was destroyed in the Cromwellian wars. Mr Bradshaw, who was chairman of the parish Council and member of the district and county Councils, had for thirty years past farmed 500 acres, of which 138 were under the plough. He said that farmers in Rutlandshire were not prosperous: there were few open failures, but many were only 'creeping along.' They made a bare living, and some of them hardly so much as that. In July he had been at Stamford Market, which he described as the most miserable meeting he had ever attended. Still there was a demand for farms, at a price, and they were nearly all let, but to quite a different class of tenant from those that were forthcoming in the old days. He knew a few farmers who *said* they made money, but however this might be, he had not. The prices were against them; thus, sheep feeding would pay very well were it not for the low value of the wool, for which he had been bid only 14s. a tod that year. For the past six years he had held his clip, although he could have sold at 22s. 6d. a tod, as he thought that it was throwing away money to let it go, and that the price must rise. In 1864 he sold his wool at 65s. a tod; 1865, 62s. 6d.; 1866, 47s.; 1867, 36s.; 1868, 42s.; 1870, 38s.; 1871, 48s.; 1876, 41s.; 1880, 36s.; 1881, 23s. 6d.; 1884, 21s.; 1888, 22s. 6d.; 1889, 22s.; 1895, 21s.; since that time he had held in hopes of a rise. The wool, he added, deteriorated very little in keeping.

Mr. Bradshaw said that there was a general complaint



of the labour throughout the county. Men were rather scarce and very independent, and the lads all went there were none left. They looked upon farm work as degrading, and education made them wish for better jobs. Trade and the building business had drawn away the men, whom he did not think would come back. Odd ones returned occasionally, but this was very rare. In his young days the labourers took pride in their work, but with exceptions that was no longer the case. Neither the women nor boys would milk, so the tenants had to do it themselves or give up cows. Thus a neighbour, a Scotchwoman, who sent milk to London, was obliged to strip ten cows with her own hands daily.

The wages of day men were 15s. a week, with harvest money and piece-work. To the latter they often objected, however, preferring the regular pay. Thus one of them said to him that he would not go to piece-work unless he could make 1s a day more than he took by the week. Altogether, although it was impossible to say what might happen in the future, the prospect was black and bad, and he thought that unless there was a change, the low prices and the shortness of labour combined must throw much of the land out of cultivation.

Mr. Bradshaw fattened 150 cattle per annum, grazing them on the pastures and feeding them off in the yards with a few roots and cake. He began to sell them out in July and continued to do so until November. He kept 200 ewes and had 260 lambs, which he fed out in the following summer and sold on Oakham market. As he had no cows or heifers his practice was to buy in his stores at two or three years of age at a price of from £14 to £16. Some of them, he said, would have to go out at cost price that year, although the first of them had done well. The drought had hit him somewhat hard. Thus on one of his grass fields which I saw, only nine beasts were running instead of the twelve that it usually carried, and on another, on which in ordinary years twenty were turned out until June, and fourteen after that month, only eight had been running for

two weeks, and there was no feed left. Of roots Mr Bradshaw had twenty acres—usually he grew thirty—swedes, cabbages, white turnips, and but two acres of mangold. His best crop in 1901 was wheat. The oats were bad and the barley only fair. The beans, however, were well corned and their yield was good.

Grass, he said, went down well in that district, adding that often the pastures which had laid themselves proved in the end as good as those which had been seeded. Thistles, however, were plentiful and a great trouble to him, although he spudded them industriously year by year. Mr Bradshaw remarked that his experience was that 'poached' or trodden land seemed to encourage the growth of thistles. For my part I have yet to find the condition of the soil under which their growth is not encouraged. What, I wonder, is the use of a thistle? Donkeys are by no means so fond of them as is commonly reported, though I have observed in the East that camels like them, I presume, because they stimulate their horny palates. Probably the true explanation of their presence on the earth was given of old to the first of farmers: 'Thorns also and *thistles* shall it bring forth to thee; . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. . . . Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.' And surely in sorrow does agricultural man eat—especially in a free-trade country.

On Mr. Bradshaw's farm I added to my store of information as to *lands*. On one of his fields which lay in this ancient formation the lands were ploughed in and levelled. As a result for some years Mr. Bradshaw won no crop off the tops of the ridges, though the furrows, whither the surface soil had been moved, bore plentifully. But on these denuded tops there came up in place of whatever had been sown, an appalling growth of docks and thistles, whereof the seeds had doubtless lain buried there for ages. At the ends of some of these high lands which had been left undisturbed I observed mounds of solid soil. These were formed in the past by the scraping of their ploughshares by generations

of the departed tillers of that field, ere they began to turn another furrow. Given the cubic capacity of the mounds and the average accumulation on the share of a plough in clay soil, it would not be difficult for an expert to calculate approximately the number of times that the land had been ploughed. I imagine that the total would prove to be almost bewildering in its vastness.

Mr Bradshaw told me that the hunting, of which there is so much in Rutland, cut both ways so far as the farmer was concerned. It brought many wealthy persons into the county, who spent money there and increased the value of house property. Thus not far from Melton I saw quite a moderate-sized residence, which, I was informed, had been let to an American gentleman for the hunting season for the handsome rent of £800. On this point another great local authority wrote to me :—

In my opinion the thing that more than any other has helped both landlords and tenants in the neighbourhood of Oakham has been the hunting. When wheat is at its present price it is a great thing to be able to get from 45s. to 60s. per ton for straw and to load the waggon back with stable manure at 5s. per waggon load. Also hay fetches an especially high price in these parts.

On the other hand Mr. Bradshaw added that so many horses galloping about the fields worked destruction on the hedges and did not improve the grass or crops. The farmers had tried to stipulate that forage should be purchased locally, but when this was conceded many of the grooms demanded 1s. a quarter commission on the oats, and if they did not receive it condemned the forage as bad. Mr. Bradshaw told me an amusing story of a farmer in the county who tried to sell his corn to a hunting resident, by whom or by whose groom, it was rejected as of inferior quality. Afterwards he sold this same stuff to a factor by sample, and presently was somewhat surprised when the factor asked him to deliver it direct to that very individual who had just refused it owing to its supposed lack of quality.

Travelling from Melton Mowbray to Nottingham through

the Vale of Belvoir, in the neighbourhood of Grunston, on the Wold Hills, where the white spire of the Early English church contrasted charmingly with the old-gold coloured stone of the tower, I saw men trimming fences in the style that is practised in the Midlands. Here in the Eastern Counties we slash the fences down; there they strike them up with a long-handled bill, shaping them thinner at the top than at the base, with the result that light and air are not cut off from the stems and roots.

About Dalby, on the Wolds, otherwise known as Old Dalby, famous for its Stilton cheese, nearly all the fields were grass, and the thistles in them showed that the land was good. At Upper Broughton—also a home of the Stilton cheese—the soil is stiff clay. Here I noted thorns growing in the meadows, and a crop of late and green corn was being cut, probably for ‘soiling’ to cattle owing to the shortness of feed.

After passing Widmerpool the land, which lay high, was very stiff. Here was a certain amount of arable, and I observed that the swedes were blue with drought. About Plumtree the country was undulating, and I saw some lush meadows which spoke well for their quality in the back end of that year of drought. Here arable and grass seemed to be about half and half. The barley, mangold, and cabbage were good, the beans and swedes bad.

At Nottingham amongst other gentlemen connected with agriculture I saw Mr. C. Pilkington, of Wollaton, who was agent to Lord Middleton, the owner of large estates in the county; Mr. W. Allsebrook, who, I think, also farmed at Wollaton; and Mr. A. A. Avis, the manager of the Nottingham Sewage Farm. Mr. Pilkington said that in the districts about Nottingham the prospects were not so bad, and that he considered Nottinghamshire one of the best counties so far as agriculture was concerned, as on the whole the farmers were more prosperous there than in many other places. In his opinion there were farmers in the county who were doing more than make a rent and earn their living,

as they combined a certain amount of *petite culture* with the production of meat and corn. For the products of this kind of cultivation there was a huge demand, but to do well at it resource was needed. Mr Allsebrook added that bad farmers were 'left behind' and went under, but the active demand for produce kept the good men on their legs.

The depression in the wool trade had, he said, led the farmer into the breeding of short-woolled sheep. Formerly the flocks were all white-faced, now they were black or grey. Milk, however, brought in more money than wool or mutton, as it was always wanted in the towns. Still most of the land did not command a very high rent. Thus about twelve miles from Nottingham one 440-acre farm, of which seventy acres were grass, which was on the landlord's hands, had recently been let at 15s. the acre.

These gentlemen said that in 1901 the wheat was threshing badly, the oats were very bad, the barley was uncertain, and the beans were a hopeless crop. That of Newark they considered the worst district, but round Retford and in the Trent Valley generally there were good grass and marshes. This was all strong land and the centre of the celery district; strawberries, raspberries, and cherries being also grown. At Sturton, where the rents ran from 18s. to 23s. an acre, the growers had done well with fruit, but at Worksop, Thorney, and Bestwood the land was sandy and given up to the production of sheep, turnips, and barley, the grass lands being poor. In such districts the rents varied from 3s. 6d. to 10s. an acre. From Mansfield to Wollaton and around Hucknall Torkard was much limestone, often of a yellow colour and good building quality. These soils required high farming, but being tractable and suited to potatoes and the production of keep, were in demand. The population on the collieries caused agricultural produce to be in request, if only the farmers would set to and satisfy the market. In many places milk used to be unattainable, but now the call for it was being met. Owing to these collieries the wages of the labourers had risen.

Thus the Irishmen received 18s. a week, with mutton on Sundays.

Mr. Allsebrook said he had some who stayed with him for ten or twelve years and were provided with sleeping accommodation in the buildings and a mess-room. Such men could save much money; indeed, one who had been so employed for fifteen years talked of having £500 in the bank. He, of course, was a saving individual; but another, I think in Mr. Allsebrook's employ, would show him £30 which he had put by—a year's economies—and depart to spend it all in a few days. The rate of local wages, they said, for cowmen, horsemen, and foremen ran from 21s. to 22s. a week, out of which they paid 2s. a week rent for cottage and garden. Skim-milk was often given to them gratis if they cared to take it home.

All three of these gentlemen said that the general experience was that the young men were going away, and did not care to learn skilled agricultural work. Mr. Allsebrook added that the 'statute' hired men would not take on for milking, and that he was obliged to train his own milkers. He was of opinion also that the labour question was more formidable than the rent question. Mr. Avis was particularly strong upon this point. He declared, and the others agreed with him, that the land could not afford to pay higher wages. The limit was reached; as it was they made little or no return from farming, and if more wages were demanded the land must go out of cultivation. Of the general independence of the young labourer Mr. Pilkington gave an amusing instance. One in his employ wore a collar so high and stiff that it interfered with his work. His master told him that he must leave it off or go. He replied, 'I'll go.' And he went.

Mr. Avis, who, in addition to the management of the Sewage farm of 1,500 acres and other Corporation property, on which the wages sheet amounted to £114 a week, carried on a large business in valuing and surveying, informed me that in Nottinghamshire the cottages were poor in many

places. He thought that landlords would have to build more; but Mr. Pilkington pointed out that in some villages the cottages provided had been left standing empty. They all agreed that labourers in later life would like to have the chance of taking a piece of land on which to keep a cow and some other stock. Also they were unanimous in stating that for agriculture pure and simple there was no prospect. Those who combined dealing with husbandry, however, they said, could make a living.

Mr. Pilkington told me that the difficulty was to let the big corn farms of 400 or 500 acres. These did not pay. He instanced the case of a man who farmed about 1,000 acres of land in the Forest district, employing a capital of £14,000, on which he earned an interest of no more than one per cent.

All of them said that the breeding of Shire horses had advantaged the county, and that the Duke of Portland and other great landlords had done much good in this matter. They thought also that there should be some change in the system of education, which, as it is arranged at present, only fitted the young for urban life and occupations.

Mr. Turner, of the firm of Bradwell & Son, auctioneers, valuers, and land agents in Nottingham, whom I saw, said that those farmers did best who worked their holdings with the help of their families. The large sheep farmers in the west of the county were not flourishing. He thought that some of the biggest of them would give up, and it was doubtful whether their holdings would be relet in all cases. Land with heart in it—that is, medium loams suitable for wheat and grazing—still sold fairly at from £30 to £45 the acre, but the latter price would be for small holdings with buildings on them. In the seventies this same land would have fetched £70 the acre. On large farms the fall in rental values was from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. Thus he mentioned a Forest farm of 500 or 600 acres that used to bring in 70s. an acre, which could be hired for 7s. 6d. an acre or less. For small-holdings, however, of from fifty to

100 acres of mixed land the demand was greater than it had been, and the rents had not varied appreciably. There were not many failures among farmers, but they lived from hand to mouth. Few of the old stamp of tenants were left in that country. One of these, a man with a long head and a long purse, who farmed 3,000 acres, had said to him, 'I made money; now I'm losing money, and I'm going out before I lose more. There is no prospect.' The rents did not recover, nor did they sink further. In 1900 there was a good demand for farms, but at a rather lower price. After the bad season of 1901, which, he thought, would reduce the capital of many farmers, he anticipated that there would be a number of farms in hand, and that the rents would come down another 2s. or 3s. per acre.

The young folk, Mr Turner said, left the villages. The system of education in force turned them from the land. Although the wages were much higher than they had been, averaging £1 a week and a cottage, they considered themselves too good for that kind of work. In his opinion there was small hope for the future, and he could see nothing that was likely to bring about a revival of agricultural prosperity.

Nottingham is a very crowded city that on both the hot days when I was there towards the end of August was draped in an atmosphere of murky mist through which the red ball of the sun could be seen shining as it does in a London fog of the third density. On one afternoon, having finished my business for the day, I went for a walk, and not knowing whither to turn my steps asked a policeman what there was of interest to be seen in the town. After consideration he replied that most visitors thought the Cemetery a very nice place. Upon my disclaiming any wish to linger there, even temporarily, he suggested the Arboretum as a *pis aller*, and thither I walked through streets reeking with new asphalt, of which the odour, though pungent, doubtless is wholesome.

The Arboretum was as are other arboreta, with an added attraction in the shape of ducks and sundry wildfowl.

What struck me most about the place, however, were the hundreds of children who had come thither to play, nearly all of whom looked very pale and anæmic at the fag end of that hot, exhausting summer. I could not help comparing their appearance with that which is presented by a crowd of country-bred youngsters coming out of school on the evening of an August day. I wondered for the thousandth time also what strange infatuation could induce their parents in search of a wage, which, however large it sounds, when the expenses are taken into account, often enough is more inadequate than that which they can earn upon the land, to desert the sweet countryside in order to live in such a place as this.

In the evening also the streets of Nottingham present a strange sight. There we saw young women, who literally might be reckoned by hundreds, slowly promenading to and fro, all of them very smartly dressed. They were quite quiet in their demeanour, and mostly walked two and two, apparently with the combined object of taking the air and showing off their finery. Most of them, it was evident, were not town-bred, but had migrated to the city to work in the mills and other businesses. Everywhere throughout England I have been told that the girls had left the villages. Here we saw whither some of them had gone, and studying them and their smart attire, the question rose in my mind as to whether the pervading love of dress has not something to do with this migration, which is, I believe, as unwholesome for the individuals concerned and for the race, as it is universal.

YORKSHIRE *

YORKSHIRE, whither I travelled from Nottingham, is nearly twice the size of any other county in England, its area of about 3,882,000 acres being almost as large as that of Wales. Its greatest length is about 124 miles and its greatest breadth about ninety miles. This enormous county is divided into three Ridings, the North, the East, and the West, which are practically separate shires, the city of York being for parliamentary purposes united to the North Riding. On this vast area the land and the agricultural conditions are so varied that it would be too long to attempt any preliminary summary of them. I will therefore content myself with describing, to the best of my ability, the different parts of the shire in the order in which I visited them, trusting that I may succeed in conveying to the reader an adequate impression of the general state of the rural interests there, although in truth to do this fully would require a volume.

When I asked Major Dent, of Ribston Hall, why it was that things agricultural in Yorkshire seemed to be on the whole more prosperous than in some other counties with equal if not greater advantages, he replied that I might think him prejudiced, but in his opinion the true underlying cause was the superior quality of the Yorkshire people. I am inclined to believe that there is much truth in this argument. Certainly I observed that the labouring men—of course I speak of those of the passing generation, for of the young folk there are the same complaints here as in every other county—seemed extraordinarily intelligent and hard-working, and well worth the high wages they receive; that the farmers thoroughly understand their business, and follow

it with a single mind ; and that the landlords for the most part, are intimately acquainted with and take a lively interest in every detail of their properties.

Nine Yorkshiremen out of ten appear to be sportsmen. Some think of horses and hunting, some of grouse and shooting, some of racing, some of cricket and fishing, but almost all of one or more of these delights. Indeed, I noticed that when two Yorkshiremen in any way connected with the land meet together, it is strange if within five minutes their conversation has not drifted on to the subject of that noble animal, the horse. That this should be so assists the county in many ways. Thus a great number of the farmers add to their incomes by breeding and making hunters, which they sell to dealers for anything up to £250, to be taken to Market Harborough and other fashionable sporting centres, and there disposed of among the rich at some still higher price. Indeed, several of them told me that were it not for the money that they earn thus they would find it quite impossible to make their farming pay.

Another advantage is that this universal love of sport keeps many of the squires on their estates, and helps to bind the farmers and the yeomen to the land. Perhaps owing to its remoteness from London, in the more rural parts of the great county of Yorkshire there still live a number of gentlemen of small or moderate property which has been held by their forefathers for generations. These men know every field they own, and are often on terms of intimacy with every tenant. Unfortunately, under pressure of the bad times, many of them are now being bought out by the rich manufacturers from the cities.

Yorkshire, speaking roughly, is cut in two by a great plain of mixed alluvial soils stretching north and south almost from the Tees to the Trent. On either side of this plain to the north-east and north-west of the county lie the Moors and the Dales; to the east and south are the Wolds and Lowlands; and to the west and south-

west stretch the rich mining and manufacturing districts. In these, together with that of Middlesbrough in North Cleveland, is found the wealth of Yorkshire, and it is their markets which give to much of the agriculture of the county such prosperity as it may possess.

My first centre was York, and before visiting these various remoter districts I began my investigations in the fertile Vale of York, which has a total area of about 1,000 square miles, under the kind and able guidance of our host, Mr. Scarth Dixon. Very different was the appearance of this great plain, and, indeed, of most of the Yorkshire land, especially the Wold, from that which was presented by many counties in that year of dreadful drought, 1901. The contrast with Norfolk, for instance, was nothing short of pitiful—for Norfolk. In the latter county the land ached with thirst: the pastures were as brown as the African veld in mid-winter, the bulbs of the turnips were many of them no bigger than apples, and farmers knew not where to find food to feed their flocks. In Yorkshire, on the contrary, by the inequitable decree of Fate, nearly all the land was green, with perhaps the single exception of the Thirsk district; while in some parts of the county the farmers told me that the season was one of the best they had ever known. For some mysterious reason during quite a cycle of years, where England is broadest the rainfall has been least. Perhaps it is more attracted by the highlands of the north.

Driving north-west from York over the great alluvial plain, in the neighbourhood of Upper Poppleton, we came to a stretch of sandy soil interspersed with patches of clay too stiff to carry sheep in winter. On the sand I saw potatoes growing, and on the heavier land were some good roots. This part of the Ainsty district used to be nearly all arable, but now quite half of it has gone down to grass. The rent of the farms here was said to vary from £1 to 30s. the acre. Leaving Marston Moor and Wilstrop Wood, the scene of the famous battle, on our left, we crossed the river

Nidd, about which were many rough and thistly pastures, whercon, however, the grass was good, and came to Kirk Hammerton, a large, straggling village where the country began to improve in appearance, and so on to Mr. Machin's farm at Cattal Grange.

Mr Machin had the local reputation of being one of the best agriculturists in Yorkshire. Certainly it was deserved, since in all England I saw no better cultivated land than this farm of 400 acres and few finer crops. Mr Machin, who added to his resources by dealing largely in cattle on commission and otherwise, told us that he considered the agricultural position in that part of Yorkshire to be fairly prosperous. By this he meant that the farmers made their rent and a living. He could not, however, go so far as to say that they earned interest on their capital in addition, while none of them were putting by money. Their condition depended a good deal upon the 'take,' some of them holding their land too dear, and not having been met in time by the landlords, while they had capital at command.

There was, he said, still a keen competition for farms in fair order, but the class of tenants who came forward were not so good as they used to be, and very frequently those who had least capital would agree to give most rent. The rents in that district, he added, varied from 30s for the best land down to 12s. or 10s for the clays, the drop from the good times being 25 or 30 per cent. Selling values had, however, sunk more. For labour they had to compete with a nursery garden in the neighbourhood, a prosperous-looking place which we saw. The current rate of wage was from 16s to 18s. for daymen, a house and garden being thrown in at the lower figure. The horsemen, who were hired by the year and fed in the house, received from £16 per annum for lads up to £27 for men of twenty-five years of age. The young men, he said, were leaving the villages, though not to the extent they did in some places. They would take a fair interest in their work, but did not give as much time to it or 'put the finish on' that they used to do

in past days. As regarded the future, he thought that the good land would always be worked, but that at present prices agriculture was a 'hand-to-mouth' business.

One of the features of Mr. Machin's farming was his custom of buying in young Shire horses at three years old, working them for two years, and selling them out at five years old, the price in being from £45 to £60, and out from £60 to £80. Indeed, this profitable practice, which puts money into the farmer's pocket and at the same time enables him to work his land at less cost, is common in Yorkshire. I may take this opportunity to say that throughout England the only stock for which I have found there is a really keen demand are sound cart horses of good quality, more especially if of the Shire stamp, the reason being that, like our country men and women, these are needed in the towns. In cart horses alone the foreigner does not seem able to compete with us, at any rate at present. Long may this remain so. Meanwhile, at prevailing prices, the industry will bear extension.

The next farmer whom I saw was Mr. C. B. Burton, of Green Hammerton, who held about 300 acres, of which one-half was grass. Mr. Burton, who, I was told, was a very fine rider, in addition to his farming, bought in, made, and sold a few hunters, and sometimes a steeplechaser or two each year. The young horses cost him about £80 apiece at four years of age, and when 'made' of course realised a great deal more. As he pointed out, however, there is much risk about the business, since if one or two go wrong, as continually happens with horses, all the profit is absorbed. Thus, at the time of our visit an animal which had been worth £120 was being used to drag a reaping machine, having broken down so completely that it was fit for nothing else. He was of opinion that farmers in that district were unprosperous and doing no more than 'hanging together,' gentlemen farmers with money alone excepted, although rents were down about 30 per cent., and of the land itself he had no complaints to make.

For labour they were better off in 1901 than in 1900, but he said that when they reached the age of about eighteen years nearly all the young men went away. Those who remained were not such good men as their fathers, and took, he told me, but little interest in their work. Thus it was difficult to find one who could or cared to make a stack, whereas in the past they would almost fight for the privilege. As soon as they were grown up they would say, 'We don't want any more farming,' and be off to the railways.

Farmers were being killed by the prices, and unless these improved Mr. Burton could see no hope. Thus in 1900 his wheat fetched 27s. a quarter, and owing to the importation of flour ground in America, when he wanted 'offal'—that is, bran, sharps, &c., used to feed pigs—he had to pay about as much for it owing to the fact that so little corn was now milled in this country. He said that a good many farmers around his district would be glad to throw up and go to South Africa if they could find an opening there, as the prices beat them, and they were 'sick of the game.' He could not understand why people applied for farms, as undoubtedly they did, but thought that the capital brought into the industry had generally been made in something else, and that many took holdings, not to make a living out of them, but in order to enjoy hunting or shooting. The prices of produce allowed no margin for any loss, and in his opinion the capital of many farmers was dwindling.

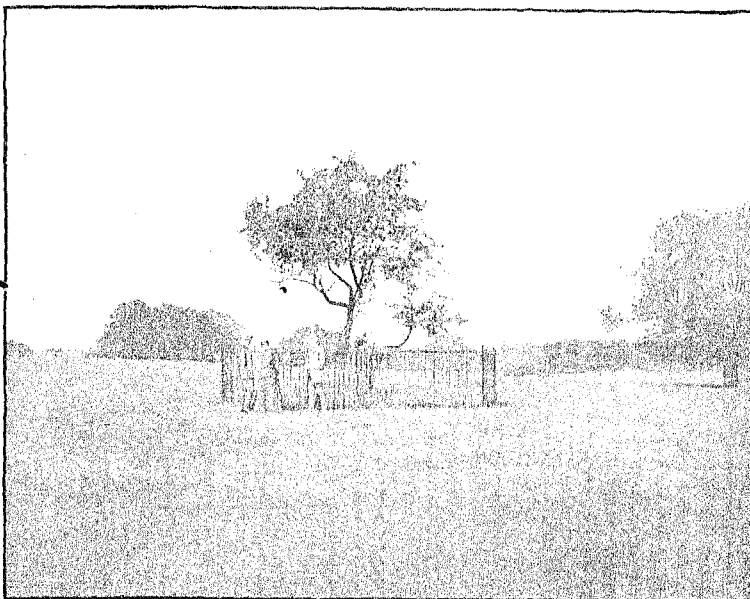
Mr. Burton kept 100 breeding ewes, of which he had sold the wool at the miserable price of 8s. a stone net. He had begun to breed stock also, as he found that it was impossible to do any good at feeding out purchased 'stores.' As to his rotation, he was varying the old four-course shift with potatoes and clover seeds, which he allowed to stand for two years.

Major Dent, of Ribston Hall, Hunsingore, the owner of some 4,500 acres in this neighbourhood, and a member of the county Council for the Riding, said he thought that things were better than they had been in 1894 and 1895,

which were their worst years. He had plenty of applications for good farms, although the rents were down 30 per cent, without allowing for the capital outlay upon improvements, such as the erection of covered yards &c. He thought that in their district both landlord and farmer could make a living and no more, but, of course, burdened estates must be in difficulties. Until lately they had not felt the pinch of the labour question, but now a great number of youths went away to the towns and the railway, and he knew of hardly any cases where they had returned; a state of affairs with which the women had much to do. Still, he was not afraid about the matter, as latterly more young men were taking cottages, and owing to the falling off in trade the exodus was not so severe. All his cottages had allotments or gardens, but many in the district were old and would bear improvement. None were empty, although he thought that the labouring population was on the decline, a difference which was accounted for by the children being fewer in number.

Major Dent had a quantity of small-holdings, varying in size from three to thirty acres, for the most part grass land, which he let very readily. Speaking from the farmer's point of view, these scarcely answered, however, unless they were near a town or had special facilities; but if their occupiers did a little jobbing, or were carriers or carters, it helped them very much. On his estate rents averaged 26s. or 27s. the acre, 30s. being the highest figure. In 1875 the same lands fetched from 40s. to 45s. the acre.

Driving to Ribston Hall, I noticed that the stacks upon Mr. Machin's farm were of sundry shapes, but all well built and very tall. His stock and crops were splendid. In the village of Walshford I stopped to look at two cottages which Major Dent had built. They contained sitting-room, kitchen, larder with cupboards and good stoves, two capital bedrooms with fire-places, and one small without, with a set of tiled out-buildings between them, the whole being of a neat elevation and done in good brickwork. These excellent



THE ORIGINAL RIBSTON PIPPIN TREE, RIBSTON HALL

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LEICESTER TUP

dwellings had been put up at the very low cost of £350 for the pair, which could scarcely have been done had not the estate labour been made use of to build them.

Ribston Hall, that stands in a beautifully timbered park of 300 acres, through which runs the sluggish river Nidd, is an exceedingly interesting place. Here there was a preceptory of the Knights Templars, which dates from the time of Richard I., and was founded by a certain Robert, Lord Roos. The gardens are among the most beautiful that ever I saw. In the midst of many specimen conifers stand two great larches, believed to be among the first introduced into England, and near to them a plane tree which, tradition says, was imported from the East by the Crusaders. In the park is the Templars' old jousting ground of carefully levelled turf, which at present measures about 330 yards in length by 104 in breadth, and is bordered on the north and south by groves of trees. I pointed out to Miss Dent, who kindly showed me this ground, that it seemed curious it should have been laid out in such a fashion that the tilting knights must have had either the morning or the afternoon sun in their eyes, which would have given one party a very unfair advantage over the other. Subsequently she investigated the matter and found that the existing plantations were made by her grandfather, and that anciently the jousting ground was nearly square, so that, doubtless, the combatants rode at each other from north to south, across the course of the sun.

Near to the tilting ground are large depressions that once were fish-ponds. I mention them because here I found another proof of the antiquity of the 'lands' of which I have spoken. In former days all this part of the park was under the plough, and the lands run to the edge of the fish-ponds and reappear in continuous lines beyond them. Therefore they must have existed before the Templars dug their stew-ponds.

The present Hall was built about 1600, but attached to it is the Templars' Chapel of St. Andrew, which was

I believe reconsecrated by the Hospitallers. This is a very interesting church, and still contains the matrices of two brasses said to have been those of Templars. One of these, however, had, I thought, from its shape, held the effigy of a woman. If so it would not be wonderful, as married brethren were admitted to the Order, although their wives were not.

In the park in front of the house we were shown the original Ribston pippin tree, of which the progeny, now alas! becoming very cankerous and difficult to grow, are famous all over the world. Its history, as it was told to me, is that Sir Henry Goodricke, a former owner of Ribston, ate an apple at Rouen in the year 1709, which he thought so good that he sent four of the pips home to England. From one of these pips sprang the original apple, the present tree being a sucker which grew from the parent root. Though still green, it was very old and thin, and in 1901 had not borne a single fruit.

Driving through Green Hammerton, a quaint village with a long green lane bordered by houses and an avenue of elms, we came to Whixley Grange, where is one of the three farms, 900 acres in all, held by Mr W. Pexton. Mr. Pexton said that as a rule he did not think that farmers were doing well; it took them all their time to make a living and their rent, although the latter had fallen 30 per cent. For young men they were badly off, as at the age of twenty or twenty-one these went on to the railway or to the towns, although a few of the good hands remained. He considered that the system of education had something to do with this state of affairs. If they left school sooner the lads might stay upon the land, but if they did not come to it early they were useless. Sunday labour was a difficulty. Ordinary labourers received 17s. a week, and hinds—that is, foremen who take in farm hands to board—18s., with a cow and perquisites. In addition to their ‘meat’ the yearly men were paid £20 a year, and a plough lad from £14 to £15 a year. Mr. Pexton thought that it was difficult to

foretell the end of this labour question, but he believed they would be worse off than they were at that time

He said that a great deal of money was turned over on a large holding, but that very little of it 'stuck.' The competition for farms was more or less to be accounted for by the fact that farmers had sons who knew and could be put to no other trade. Thus he had three lads who must each be started in a farm, and a friend had seven. I asked, How about capital? To this he replied that in these days most of the capital that went into farming came from outside sources. For his part he could see nothing very hopeful in the future, when the keen competition of foreign imports, which were not likely to decrease, was taken into consideration. Yet he seemed to be anxious that the restrictions on the importation of Canadian cattle should be removed.

If this were done it would, he said, be a great help, which doubtless is true enough so far as graziers are concerned. But how about breeders and the risk of infection? The high price of Irish store cattle, of which he bought and grazed a good number, often absorbed, he said, all the profit on feeding them out. Potatoes he considered an uncertain and variable crop, especially as in that district they could not grow a very heavy weight per acre, six or seven tons being their average return. Generally he followed a six-course shift: turnips, barley, seeds (one year), mangold, potatoes, oats or wheat. His mangolds were of good quality, but not of a large sort. Of sheep he kept a thousand in winter, his ewe flock, which were of the Cheviot stamp that he crossed with Oxford Downs, numbering 300. He also bred Shires, keeping mares and a travelling stallion, and selling geldings—a business which he said did well. I should add that a third of Mr. Pexton's acreage was grass.

The next farmer whom I saw was Mr. J. Theakton, of Whixley Moor, Little Ouseburn, who held 500 acres, of which 200 were grass. At his house, also, I met Mr. H. Knowles, of Hunsingore, who was, I believe, a large dealer

and grazier, farming 1,300 acres, of which two-thirds were grass, and spending as much as £2,000 a year on his cake bill. These gentlemen said that farming was not a money-making business. They were just 'keeping the beans in the bag' and no more. Mr. Knowles added that men with big families got on, otherwise there was not much in the trade. They both thought, however, that Yorkshire was holding its own as well as most counties. For one thing, they had the advantage of being close to markets, whereas the Lincoln farmers were obliged to pay long carriage on their produce. Moreover, the four-course shift was now often broken by potatoes, and the farmer could sell his clover; a thing forbidden twenty years before, which was a help to him.

The rents varied from 20s. to 25s. In the bad years between 1875 and 1885 these were not reduced. Then they fell 33 per cent., but in the meantime many of the sitting tenants were broken, with the result that the country had to be restocked. Mr. Knowles, who employed Irishmen, said that he had sufficient labour, more, indeed, than for some time past, and Mr. Theakton said that at harvest time more hands applied for work than they wanted. Both agreed, however, that the young men went away to towns, that very few of them came back, and that when they did they were of no use. Mr. Theakton thought that in this respect the position would gradually get worse, and said that although self-binders and other machinery overcame the difficulty of harvest, there was trouble in the autumn of the year in dealing with potatoes.

Mr. Knowles, who grazed 500 or 600 cattle, told me that strong, 'competent' American stores were hard to come by. The capital invested in grass farms was from £15 to £20 the acre, and grazing left no profit. He had a good many thousands sunk in farming on which he earned no interest. A fall of another penny a pound on meat would kill the fattening industry; and unless they could buy stores at £3 a head less they would be obliged to give up. Twenty years before there had been a fine market, since then things had

gone steadily worse. The land had fallen down to grass, the dairy stock had decreased and been replaced by grazing stock, with the result that there was less importation of and more demand for stores. These, however, were imported in fewer numbers, and it was this question of the supply of stores which would beat the graziers, many of whom, like himself, never bred anything. The result was that, bad as the prices of produce might be, he thought that there was more profit to be got from the best arable than from the best grass lands. He had large dealings with farmers and knew their position, which was that they only tided over from year to year, while in some cases their capital diminished. In this month of August 1901 there were, he declared, more farms advertised in the 'Yorkshire Post' than had been the case for years past.

The local wages, these gentlemen said, were 16s. a week, with free cottage, milk, potatoes, and 30s. a week for a month at harvest. More than this the farmer could not afford to pay, but they thought that the men ought to have better cottages. For small-holdings there was little demand in that district, and those which existed were too highly rented. Mr. Theakton bred, bought in, worked, broke, and sold Shire horses, a business which he declared was in 1901 as good as, or better than it had ever been. He believed that the weighty cart-horse would always hold its own in price. He informed me that their best barley was as good as any produced in most parts of Yorkshire, but he added that in 1901 his crop of corn was the worst which he had cut for twenty years.

On one day of my stay at York we drove into the North Riding to visit Mr. Herbert Burton, of Fall Gates, Newton-on-the-Ouse, about ten miles away, and other farmers in that district. After leaving the city we passed over flat strong-soil lands, of which about 60 or 70 per cent. were grass, having the Ouse on our left. Here the fences were low and well kept, and there were several woods containing good oaks. About Shipton, traditionally

connected, I believe, with the mythical propheticess of that name, a wide-streeted village with neat red cottages, the fields were small, and on some of them the corn crop still stood in stooks. In this neighbourhood the roads were exceedingly good, and by them, at distances of five yards apart, lay loads of macadam, and at twenty yards apart of granite chips, to ensure their proper binding when repaired in the autumn. After crossing the Ouse the land was mostly good grass, that near to the river being the most valuable. Here the scene was very bright and pastoral, varied as it is with wood and water. The village of Linton-on-Ouse, with its red brick and slated, or tiled roofed cottages and its orchards of apple or walnut, presented a particularly pleasing and prosperous appearance.

Mr. Herbert Burton, who farmed 1,000 acres in three farms that lay together, and who was born on this place, said that thirty years ago, when stores cost £3 less than they did at present and beef sold for 12s. a stone, anybody could live at the business; but now if a man was to succeed he must be up early, use his head-piece, and keep looking round him.' For his part, he was 'a bit of a pusher,' and had three sons who went to work like ordinary labourers, by which means he kept 'the cart-wheel running.' All of them hunted, but they made their hunting pay; thus at the York Show he had sold a young horse for £150 which cost him £25. Unless farmers went in for something special they could not get on. He believed that the bulk of them lost money; indeed, he knew of a number who did so even on good farms, but could not make up their minds to give up. He bred from fifty to seventy calves every year, most of which at two years old were sold out as stores, and sometimes fetched as much as £17 apiece. Also he bred a number of colts, both hunters and cart-horses, and reared a few sheep from a flock of 100 ewes.

For labour Mr. Burton said he was better off than he had been. Indeed, that harvest many Irish could not find hirers. This difference was owing to the self-binder. It was

not easy, however, to secure young men, and if one went it was hard to replace him. He thought that within a few years there would be a reaction, that the towns would supply their own labour, and that the country would not be drawn upon as had been the case. Here, I am sorry to say, I must differ from Mr. Burton. It is a well-known fact that cities do not and cannot breed their own manual labour, at any rate for more than one generation; after which the progeny of town folk will seldom take to hard physical work, although they may become clerks, or waiters, or shopmen, or house-porters, or drift into the great army of loafers. The actual toil of the world, as I believe, always has been and always will be done by those bred upon the land.

Mr. Burton said that he allowed his men two cows each and twenty hens, with free cottages and potatoes, which brought up their wage, taking the year through, to an average value of 26s. a week. He supplied the cows, fed them, and took the risk of their going wrong; but the calves belonged to him and the skim-milk was used to feed his animals. Living as he did in an 'out^o place,' if he refused these privileges the men would not stop. In the matter of fowls, the rule was that each spring his labourers must not have more than twenty hens. If they got a little corn out of him to feed them—well, he knew nothing about it; but he did know that anyone who wished to keep a good man must overlook such small leakages. A higher wage could not be paid, but a farmer must have labour. The result of his system was that his men had never done working till six o'clock at night. In answer to my inquiries he said that the custom of his neighbours was to allow one cow to a man.

It will be observed that Mr. Burton's treatment of his labourers was extraordinarily liberal, more so indeed than many farmers would be able to afford. In his case, however, the experiment seems to have answered. Cow-keeping, he said, had gone out a good deal in that district owing to the difficulty in finding men to milk. He was of opinion

that the present system of education was mainly responsible for the exodus, which continued in spite of the fact that on such farms as his men were better off than in the towns. Under such conditions hard-working, deserving people could get on. Thus three men, who could neither read nor write, whose grandfather and father had worked for the family, had taken a 150-acre farm and were doing well. Cottages, he added, were plentiful. Half of Mr Burton's land was pasture, but he also laid down strong soil for three years, after which he fallowed it for a year before planting a white crop. This land took grass well if dressed with basic slag and manure, and he had put 100 acres of it into permanent pasture.

The average rents ran from 20s. to 25s. the acre. For 500 acres of land in his hire he paid £500. It used to be £600, therefore there was a fall of 25 per cent. He had 100 acres under wheat which gave him an average of three and a half quarters of wheat per acre, 100 under barley that produced a malting sample of from four to five quarters the acre, and 100 under roots that, so far as turnips were concerned, had failed in 1901. He told me that if there was a farm to let in that district plenty of people would be after it, the most of them farmers' sons. A good many farmers with large families had made money in the past, and it was from these families that the demand came. He added that 'the man who works the farm with the help of his sons is the man who will get on.' All his life he had worked as he was taught to do, and he had brought up his sons in the same way.

He had not intended that they should take to farming, but he could find nothing else for them to do. Mr Burton said that few people had been obliged to struggle harder than his wife and himself. Thus he had suffered a terrible loss of calves from husk-worm in the throat and quarter-evil, and so lately as the previous year a hailstorm, which hardly touched anybody else, had threshed his corn and pulped his roots, doing him damage to the extent of several

hundred pounds. Still he had worked through these troubles—the reader may guess how and why

I walked over much of Mr. Burton's holding, which was excellently farmed. In one field we saw about twenty of his young horses of various breeds, some of which looked very promising. Here also grew that ancient oak standing on the crest of a well-defined 'land,' of which I have spoken and reproduced a photograph in my chapter upon Northamptonshire.

I think it was in the neighbouring parish of Aldwaik that I saw Mr. Kendall, the holder of a small farm of 150 acres. My visit to him was quite by chance, as we called at his house to ask our path which we had lost in a by-road, and to take shelter from a storm of rain. Mr. Kendall told me that he had worked his own way up, beginning as a labourer without a penny. He said that he had toiled hard, but his luck had been pretty good, and now he had two sons to help him. Also he kept two labouring men. He thought that a good, managing farmer could push along and that the best did pretty well, but that with many of them 'it was a tight fit.' His rent was 24s. an acre, which he considered 'plenty high enough,' as there were many expenses on a farm, and unless a man 'puts it in he cannot draw it out.' If farms would not pay for 'doing well,' they would not pay at all. Labour, Mr. Kendall said, was better that year than in 1900; but all the best young fellows went when they were about twenty, as they disliked the hard work. He added, 'It's a slavish game: a man really earns his money by the time he gets it.'

Mr. Kendall had thirty acres of grass, all laid down in the five years during which he had held this farm. Also there were twelve acres of very good wheat, excellent fields of barley and roots and ten acres of potatoes, which he said paid as well as anything. To these he gave 4 or 5 cwt. of kainit per acre to sweeten the soil after the land had been ridged up. A month later a dressing of farmyard manure was applied, then 6 cwt. per acre of artificial

specially prepared for this crop, after which the potatoes were planted. Mr Kendall bred all his cows, selling out some as down-calvers. His cattle were of a good class and looked well, as did his potatoes and roots. His yard was full of stacks, there was a nice little orchard, and on the stubbles I noticed fowl-houses. Mr. Kendall himself was a very intelligent man and evidently a hard worker who thoroughly deserved his success. His whole place was scrupulously clean and well kept, perhaps through the exertions of his two nice-looking and neatly attired daughters.

The next farmers that I visited, crossing the Swale by a private bridge in order to do so, were Mr. Jacob Smith and his son, of Humberton, Helperby, about seventeen miles from York. Mr. Smith, who was a large agriculturist of many years' experience, said that in this district farmers could pay their rent and make a living, but not many were able to make an interest on their capital as well. There was a good demand for medium-sized farms of from 200 to 400 acres, but the bigger ones were not so easy to let. Mr. Smith's farm was, I think, one of the largest, covering, I understood, 740 acres, of which 350 were grass. The reason for this demand was, he said, that people who had been brought up as farmers had nothing else to which to turn. He thought that men who bred cattle did better than those who grazed them, and that potatoes were a great help. The tenants had full liberty to sell clover, or any other produce, but the manurial value thus lost must be replaced. Thus Mr. Smith, jun., said that he farmed under the Crown and was bound to put back artificial to the cash value of the clover sold off.

He told me that ten times as much artificial manure was now used in that district as had been put upon the ground fifteen years before. The capital employed was generally less than £8 the acre, nor did Mr. Smith think that it was as plentiful as it might be. He said that the young men went and lads were scarce and hard to come by, but that for the past fifty years he could not remember being better off for labour than they had been that harvest. If rents had fallen 30 per

cent., wages had risen from 13s or 14s. in 1875 to 16s. or 17s. a week in 1901. A good many of his men had a cow and rented an acre of land for £2. He found the cow and they gave him back the calf, but most of them had now bought their cows, which they fed on the acre of land with the calves.

On the whole he seemed to think the position moderately hopeful, although in 1901 the prospect was not good, but he said that they were suffering from a want of cattle. They could not buy in their stores at a price proportionate to the value of the finished beef. Their land was feeding land, but they caked the beasts out. Formerly, Mr. Smith said, the cattle used to be fatted out without cake, but now they were obliged to cake them. The only explanation was that given by the local butcher, who declared that the grass lands were not so nutritious as they had been, why it was difficult to say. Certainly, however, the beasts did not feed off so quickly as of old. Under 7s. a stone, beef was a bad trade for them, and Mr. Smith told me that the rise or fall of 1s. a stone made a difference of £500 a year to his pocket.

They followed the four-course system—turnips, barley, seeds or potatoes, wheat or oats. Of wheat he only grew thirty acres; formerly it used to be a hundred. The average return was four quarters to the acre, of barley, which was a malting sample, five quarters; and of oats seven quarters. In 1901 the corn crop was small in bulk, but the yield would be average. Roots also were a poor crop. Mr. Smith was a believer in basic slag, with which he dressed heavy land at the rate of half a ton to the acre. In his opinion this manure should be put on in October or November, so as to get the rain and snow upon it, and not in the spring, as is so commonly done. On this farm we first came in contact with the blue-faced, long-woolled Wensleydale ewes, which Mr. Smith believed to be the old Teeswater sheep.

The selling value of the land seemed to have sunk a good deal in that neighbourhood. Thus, Mr. Smith mentioned an estate of 2,500 acres of splendid soil with a fine mansion

on it that used to be valued at £50 the acre. When it was put up recently only £72,000 was bid, that is, under £29 the acre. The rents in the district varied, he said, from 20s. to 28s. Mr. Smith, jun., added that the best estate he knew let at 30s. the acre.

Travelling from York to Garforth, near Leeds, in the West Riding, we passed over much of the flat alluvial plain of the Vale of York. Some of this soil was good and some seemed to be poor, producing gorse and thistles, amongst which horned, black-faced Highland sheep were feeding. The fields were large, and generally the country struck me as poorer than that which I had seen during the previous days, some of the oats being much infested with colt's-foot. About Ulleskelf was light land with thistles and tussocky grass, some potatoes and indifferent mangolds. Timber was plentiful here. At Church Fenton, where the land was high and undulating, roots were a weak and patchy crop, but I saw some good fields of potatoes. Here the soil was poor on limestone. Around Micklefield lay wide, open land, and I noticed in the railway cuttings that the limestone was very deep.

At Lotherton I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Herbert Prater, agent for many thousand acres of land in this neighbourhood and elsewhere, the property of the Gascoigne family. In driving to Lotherton through Partington I saw some very good crops of barley and roots, but the soil is somewhat soapy and, Mr. Prater said, runs together in wet weather and forms a pan on the limestone. The rent here seemed to be about £1 an acre. Many potatoes were grown, Bruce and Up-to-date being the favourite sorts. Beech and sycamore were the most frequent trees. Passing over a remnant of fifty or sixty acres of moorland, known as Hook Moor, where five roads meet, and by Lotherton Hall, we came to the pretty and prosperous-looking village.

On the whole Mr. Prater had a very cheerful tale to tell, the fact being that the nearness to the great market of Leeds makes land valuable and sought after. Thus the rents on

these properties had not appreciably diminished since 1875, and there are but few places in England where as much can be said. Mr. Prater informed me that there were any amount of applications for farms. Thus, for one of 277 acres, which used to be let at 18s., he had thirty applicants.

£1. He liked to find a man with a trade, or a dealer in hay and straw, or cattle, as these people did the best.

Of labour he said that farmers were feeling this question very severely, but he had raised his wages, and therefore did not suffer. Also just then the coal-pits were working badly, which meant that there were more men available for the land. I have observed in various districts that wherever there are great manufactories, or much employment on railways or in mines, the rural labour conditions are apt to change very quickly in accordance with the flow and ebb of demand in these industries. It is the far country parts that are being bled to death of their men and women, since thence everyone departs and but few return.

Mr. Prater paid waggoners £1 a week and gave them a row of potatoes. On the Partington farms dairymen and carters received 21s. and labourers from 2s. 9d. to 3s. a day, with good cottages at 1s. 6d. or 2s. a week rent. He thought that farmers would be obliged to raise their rate of wage if they wanted to secure hands. There was great trouble about Sunday milking which the men would not do; indeed, he knew cases where the sons and daughters were obliged to undertake the milking. I asked Mr. Prater whether milking machines would not help, but he told me that he believed them to be a failure, as they made the cows 'run their milk.' A friend of his had tried the machine and gone back to hand milking.

Mr. Prater informed me that the young people were leaving the parish, although they had a village Institute on the most approved model, with two billiard tables, where many entertainments were given, to which people could belong at a subscription of 4s. a year. This Institute was a comparative failure, and out of 1,000 people only sixty

cared to be members. He was convinced that the education which the children received unfitted them for country and domestic pursuits. Thus when Mrs. Prater offered £1 1s. for a sewing prize, only two girls competed, and in both cases their work was worthless. Meanwhile, like other big cities, Leeds was feeling the influx and the difficulty of housing its multitudes although an attempt was being made to relieve this pressure by the building of working men's flats.

Skilled agricultural labourers were growing scarcer, and he thought that, owing to the paucity of thatchers, Dutch barns would become a necessity. On that estate a number of cottages had been built at the high average cost of £280 each, although two 'couples' had been put up at £310 the pair. These cottages were let at 3s. 6d. a week, which returned 3 per cent. on the outlay. Mr. Prater said that, as regarded the agricultural outlook of this part of England, he was no alarmist, but he was interested in Hampshire also, and what they were going to do there he did not know. To talk of Protection and bounties was useless; the only hope seemed to be to lay the land down to grass and to save every expense possible, farming it very carefully with the aid of modern machinery.

At Garforth I saw the land of the Manor Farm, which is part of the Partington estate, and has been leased by the East and West Ridings Joint Agricultural Council, although unfortunately I was unable to accept the kind invitation of the authorities to show me the place in detail. The objects of this farm are to put the instruction given by the Agricultural Department of the Yorkshire College into practice, and to provide facilities for conducting agricultural research by means of experiments. Of these many are carried on at the Manor Farm that extends to 295 acres, of which 150 are pasture. Also it provides, at moderate fees, instruction, practical and theoretical, for young men intending to become farmers, landowners, agents, valuers, or teachers of agricultural science. I understand that the

number of students is increasing, and that generally the enterprise is proving very useful.

Here I came into contact with miners for the first time. For the most part they were somewhat pallid-faced men, bent by stooping in the tunnels and wearing heavy wooden-soled boots. They live very well and often go to and return from their work by train, as we saw them doing. Mr. Prater told me a story of a miner's family in the neighbourhood who were seen, I think, by himself, with three joints of different sorts of meat on the table at one meal. Within a fortnight these same people were applying for parish relief!

Not being at all well at the time I asked to be directed to the quietest hotel in Leeds. If that hostelry was the most quiet, what the others can be like I know not. All night long trams ran, engines shrieked, and carts rattled in a fashion that made sleep almost impossible. Never have I visited a city that was noisier, or one more busy and thriving.

About Arthington, on the road from Leeds to Harrogate, in the West Riding, looking over a valley which stretches away for miles, and is watered by the river Wharfe, the traveller sees the western moorlands, while to the east of him, still pierced by the valley, rise the swelling uplands. Here the vale is rich and the pasture good, but on the higher ground Nature is at war with man striving to choke his cultivation with her ferns and grasses. The uplands are nearly all pasture—indeed, throughout this district grass predominates—and, as a consequence, the farming of sheep, cattle, and milk.

On our first expedition from the charming town of Harrogate, noted for its healing waters and fine air, we stopped to visit Mr. Hutton, the bailiff of our host, Mr. Beckett Faber, M.P. Mr. Hutton is a man of much experience, who for many years farmed at the upland village of Stainburn. He said that in this district the farming is mixed, and the land was going more and more to grass, so that

at the present time perhaps 90 per cent. of it is pasture. He estimated the rents at Stainburn and at Leathley, beneath the hill, at from 30s. to 40s. per acre.

He considered the condition of the agricultural interest to be bad, and that the labour was scarce and dear, although the wages for daymen, were 18s. a week with cottage, milk, potatoes, and cartage of coals. Some cottages in the villages had fallen down for want of occupants, and the young people were leaving for the towns. He himself had farmed under a very good landlord, who met the times by reducing his rent liberally, but as the rise in the cost of labour more than swallowed up the difference, he gained nothing by this kindness. Indeed, it was this labour question that caused him to give up farming, which he would not have done had he been provided with a large family. In his opinion those did best who worked their holdings by the aid of sons and daughters, and thus were able to dispense with the services of hired men.

Mr F. H. Fawkes, whom we visited at Farnley, in Wharfedale, owns some 14,000 acres of land in Yorkshire, of which he had about 700 acres in hand. I cannot do better, therefore, than give some particulars of this property as I gathered them from what we saw, and from information kindly furnished to me by Mr. Fawkes. The estate varies in character from a few farms of rich feeding land of high rental value, say, perhaps, up to £2 the acre, lying along the banks of the river Wharfe, to poor lands bordering on the Moors, which are often left down to grass for seven years and then brought under the plough again. The great bulk of the property, however, is made up of small farms of an average size of 120 acres, bringing in a rental of about 22s. the acre.

The rent, by the way, in this country of small-holdings has varied but little since 1875, indeed it seems to be much the same as it was sixty years ago. The farms—except a few of the largest—are generally worked by the tenant with the help of his own family. Thus, unless the farmer has

no family or his children are small, outside labour is seldom required. In these cases, however, yearly servants are hired at Martinmas to 'live in'—that is, to board in the house at wages which vary in accordance with the age of the youth or man, and rise as high as £26, in addition to food and washing. The principal industry of the tenants—most of whom, with their forefathers, have lived on the property for generations—is that of rearing home-bred 'whey' or female calves. The bull calves are sold, and it is customary to keep the whey calves until they have dropped their second calf, when they are sold as new 'calven' cows on the Otley market at prices which average about £15 10s. a head. Otley, by the way, possesses two excellent auction marts, with weekly sales, at which are disposed of almost all the stock reared in the district.

This time-honoured method of farming seems well suited to the locality, and new comers who attempt other fashions usually fail or fall into line with the local custom. Few of the tenants sell milk, and those who do so find that it means rising at four in the morning and very often a drive of four miles to a station in order to despatch their milk to Leeds. During the last six years or so several of the farmers have purchased hand separators, marketing the butter and giving the separated skim to the calves after the addition of oatmeal or some other food equivalent. On this mixture they appear to thrive.

Mr. Fawkes thought that the prices of stock in 1901 showed no great cause of complaint, but that the outlook for the autumn and winter could not well be worse, as it was then too late to expect much feed for the 'back end' of the year. Speaking generally, he was of opinion that farmers in the district could not be said to be making more than a bare living. Those who had grown-up families to assist them did the best, but in some cases the sons declined to stop at the low wage, or no wage, which they received from their parents, and drifted into the towns.

One of the prevailing characteristics of this country is

the sparseness of its population. There are scarcely any villages, and, as they are not wanted, the cottages have been pulled down and their materials used for repairs. The population, indeed, has shrunk to the lowest possible limit, and a further decrease must mean that the farms would become derelict. Mr. Fawkes is a believer in small-holdings, and stated that if he had to do with large farms and plough lands he did not know what would happen to him. His tenants he considered to be a very hard-working set of men, who labour early and late to earn their living.

In the company of Mr. Fawkes we visited a number of these tenants. No. 1 was a comparatively large farmer in the Dale itself. I think he held about 400 acres, some of which were good pastures bordering the river. He kept a dairy of forty cows and turned out about 120 fat animals per annum, which consumed some two tons of cake a week. When I asked him how he thought the farmers were getting on, he replied that he could not say, but he knew how he was getting on, and that the price of milk and meal and the cost of labour made farming a very poor business. He worked very hard, finishing his milking by 4.30 in the morning, and sending the milk off to Leeds, where it fetched 8½d. the imperial gallon, out of which he paid half the cost of carriage. Except in special cases, he only kept his cows 'once round,' and then fattened them out—that is to say, he did not breed from them a second time. His calves he sold at two days old for 25s or 30s. His land was nearly all grass, but in 1901 he found it very difficult to fatten animals, and that even cake did not bring them along. His conclusion was that 'it would be a very bad year.'

No. 2 farmed fifty acres, and had no arable land and no dairy. He said that farmers were doing badly, and although 6½d. a pound was a fair price for beef, the beasts would not fatten that year. He complained much of the labour, saying that the young men all left, but in former

days there were plenty of them. There was a great deal of plough land then, but to him it seemed a good thing that this was now laid down.

No. 3 rented 169 acres of rather poor land. He bred some calves, and sold them out as down-calvers at two years old. Also he 'gisted'—that is, took in at a price other people's cattle to graze during the summer months. This man met with a great misfortune in 1900, losing four Irish bullocks through sickness; but of this I imagine that his landlord bore the brunt.

No. 4 had a strong-soil hill farm, much of which was drained by pipe. His swedes were a very poor plant, and the white turnips almost a total failure. As we walked over his holding we saw this man getting in his corn, and I observed that his daughter stood upon the stack helping to lay the sheaves, while another child led the waggon. This is a sight that is only to be seen on small-holdings, where the people are working for themselves.

No. 5, a Scotchman, held 110 acres of grass land in the parish of Stainburn. With the exception of a few cottages, this village has vanished; indeed, from Farnley to Pateley Bridge, some fifteen miles away, there are, I understand, no villages. He was a cheerful-mannered man, but when I asked him how he was getting on he answered that when he came from Scotland 'he thought that he would find a fortune, but that he was working now for nought.' He said that the farmers were all complaining, and that anybody who had to pay servants could not live. He kept twenty cows and sent the milk to Leeds twice a day from a station four miles distant. To do this he and his three sons and a daughter must rise at 3.45 A.M. Needless to add, they went to bed early.

Such—for these samples may suffice—is the lot of the small-holders in this district; a hard one it will be seen, but still they live.

Farnley Hall, Mr Fawkes's seat, which stands in a fine park bounded by the Wharfe, is a beautiful old Elizabethan

house. Here are preserved many relics of the Civil War, such as Cromwell's hat that he wore at the battle of Newbury. It is made of hard grey felt, and in shape and size is not at all unlike the fashionable headdresses worn by London ladies at *matinées*. Also I have seen hats very similar in appearance upon the heads of *caballeros* in Mexico. The Protector's sword is here, too, a long straight blade which he carried at Marston Moor, and with it the sword and other articles connected with Sir Thomas Fairfax.

In this house also are some almost priceless pictures, among them the lovely half-length of Lady Hamilton as Nature with its famous face of cherubic innocence, and two splendid Turners, which, in strange contrast with one that I saw in the Nottingham Castle Museum, are quite unfaded. Further, hanging in the drawing-room, are a great number of water-colours by Turner, who used to stay much in this house; a charming Reynolds, a Magdalen by Guido, and a picture of the Virgin, I think by Carlo Dolci, which is a wonderful piece of colour. Altogether few houses that I have visited contain so many treasures.

Mr. Sam Mills, hon. secretary to the Knaresborough and District Agricultural Association, said that the holdings in that neighbourhood varied in size, and that those of the farmers who had money were in a comfortable position, but he thought that capital was decreasing gradually. On the whole, he could not say that Yorkshire farming was prosperous, as the foreign competition pressed them so hard. Many agriculturists had been going down hill and losing their principal, and others were only just getting along. Thus he mentioned a gentleman who in 1900, which was a better year than 1901, turned over £7,000, and after paying rent and interest found that he had 8s. 4d. for himself. Their prosperity depended largely, however, upon the character of the soil they occupied. Thus, in places like Hampsthwaite, where the light-land rents were as low as 7s. 6d. an acre, the farmers were poor, struggling people;

and the same might be said of those on the rocky moorland between Harrogate and Bolton, where they only existed.

In the vales, where the soil was rich, it was different. In short, on the lowlands they were doing, on the uplands they were starving. In many places, also, better buildings were wanted and the sanitary conditions were bad. In some villages, too, the cottages were very inferior, and in others many stood empty. Thus in Great Ouseburn, which had a population of between 300 and 400, there were twenty-four to let six weeks before our interview, and in other places which he mentioned the case was much the same.

In certain districts the labour question had become serious, as the people were leaving the land. The wages were from 18s. to 20s., but it must be remembered that in bad weather the labourer was paid nothing. He thought that a readjustment of this system and the creation of more small-holdings, together with the building of village Institutes and the provision of sports and amusements, would help to stop the exodus. Also he was a believer in co-operation. As it was the low prices and the lack of labour must end in driving land out of cultivation.

While staying with Mr. Beckett Faber I attended a luncheon which he gave to the Institute of Journalists at Fountains Abbey, which had been lent for the occasion by its owner, the Marquess of Ripon. Truly this is a most beautiful place—run upon ruin, each nobler and more lovely than the last. What could be more majestic than the Norman arches of the nave? What more perfect in their way than the pillared vaults of the cellarium, where our meal was served? I think that our forefathers must have built beautiful things without knowing that they were beautiful, or surely they would never have been allowed to fall into ruins. Or it may be that succeeding generations, artistic as they were in their own style, did not appreciate the work of those who went before them. Otherwise the people of the days of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth would scarcely have allowed Fountains Abbey to fall into decay.

A noble feature of this place are the pleasure grounds running along the valley of the Skell and up the steep sides of the ravine, which are clothed with evergreens and splendid specimen trees. I remember that the light from beneath a storm cloud shining on the tall, red stems of some Scotch firs that stood on the further side of the ornamental water, produced one of the most beautiful effects of contrasting and yet blended colours that ever I saw in any country.

At this luncheon it was my lot to inflict a speech on Agriculture and Rural Depopulation upon the Institute of Journalists, who, somewhat to my surprise, seemed to be quite interested in the subject. I venture to reproduce a part of it cut from a newspaper report, not from any pride in the oration, but because in somewhat rough-and-ready language, such as may perhaps be forgiven in an impromptu address of the sort, it does represent in few words my personal views upon the important matters of Protection, small holdings, and the desirability of more interest being taken by British Governments in questions connected with the land and its population.

Also I wish to take this opportunity to repeat the appeal to the Press which I made at Fountains to assist my efforts to call attention to the great national evils which must result from this rural depopulation if it is allowed to go on unchecked. An individual—especially if he lacks official position—can do but little in such a matter. But the Press can do much, if it will. This is no party question; it is one of the future welfare of our country; and because this is so I venture to ask the Press of the country not to allow it to be thrust aside for the reason that it is inconvenient, difficult to deal with, and perhaps unpopular.

Noticing what Mr. Faber had said about his investigations into the depopulation of country districts, Mr. Rider Haggard said: 'I have carried these out to the best of my ability, but I have seen once or twice that my efforts have been—no doubt unintentionally—a little misrepresented. For instance, I observed

the other day in the papers that a gentleman well known and respected in this county—Mr. Foljambe—alluding to my work, said—if he were reported aright—that the keynote of it was Protection. Now myself I have not pleaded that cause in my articles, though I have at different times quoted the arguments of people who do; and I take this opportunity publicly to wash my hands of Protection. Whatever arguments there may be in favour of it, and they are many, we, as men of the world, have to face facts. Believe me, Protection can only be introduced into this country after some disaster too serious for us to contemplate. To talk about Protection as a remedy for the evils by which we are surrounded is merely to dash our heads against a wall. We must look to other palliatives. I make these remarks because Mr. Foljambe has so evidently misunderstood what I have written. Further, he observed that the second main point in my articles was the establishment of small-holdings, which, if I remember aright, he said amounted to nationalisation of the land. I am not able to say from my own judgment and knowledge how small-holdings mean the nationalisation of the land. He then went on to add that such small-holdings if established throughout the country would mean the ruin of the country. Now I have never urged that the whole of England should be cut up into small-holdings. I have urged, however, and do urge, the extension of small-holdings. I am convinced that if there is any salvation for our present conditions we must look more or less to small-holdings and small men, and that is a very different thing from arguing that all this great realm ought to be cut up into little tenancies. The accurate and persistent thought of statesmen should be brought to bear upon these matters; and I say this, as I am certain of it—for in travelling the length and breadth of most of England I have gained some knowledge—that the small-holding—the establishing of the small man upon his small acreage—is one of the few possible remedies to which we can look in our present state of distress.

He was doing his best to force this view on the country, but his was only one voice, and sometimes, he feared, a voice crying in the wilderness. He was convinced that much could be done outside of Protection to help to keep the rural population on the land—‘and, mind you,’ he added, ‘in that is involved nothing less than the future of your country.’ First of all there must be a will to do it; they must impress upon the Government the necessity of doing it. And who was to do this unless it were the gentlemen of

the Press? 'I appeal to you,' he said, 'to bring it home to the Government, to force it into the minds of our rulers that they must turn their attention for a little to our homeland and to the countryside. It is well that we should have an Imperial Empire. For years I have been an Imperialist, there are few who know more of some parts of the Colonial Empire than I do; yet with that knowledge, I do say to you that what is most earnestly needed in this country now is a Government which will turn its intelligence a little to home affairs; which will give to rural England, that made us in the past, as much consideration, let us say, as they devote to the affairs of East Africa. At present nothing is given. Agriculture is practically, for the purposes of the House of Commons, for the purposes of the Government, a dead letter; it is a bore, a thing to be thrust aside. There is, it is true, a Minister of Agriculture; but he is a Minister almost without powers. I say all this should be changed, it should be recognised that, after all, the manhood and womanhood of England, that have made England the proudest power in the world, were reared in the villages; it should be recognised that slowly but certainly hundreds of those villages are being depopulated, as Bismarck said, "bled to the white." Surely it is worth the attention of our Governments to see whether means and measures cannot be found and adopted to stay this disastrous exodus, as indeed I believe they can, although I have no time to speak of them now. To you who are representatives of the Press I appeal, each of you according to what lies in your power, to bring all this home to those in authority, sure that doing thus you will be doing a very good work for which posterity will be grateful to you.'

As the name of Mr. Foljambe appears in this report I should add that in a letter published subsequently in the 'Yorkshire Post' he wrote:—

'I am glad to find that he [i.e. myself] absolutely disclaims any recommendation of Protection, as it was Protection and not small-holdings that I stated could only be compatible with nationalisation of the land. If the community were to be taxed by duties on foreign produce, not for revenue, but for the benefit of one class, the nation would, I think, justly demand that the artificial profits should come into the National Exchequer, and not into the pockets of either tenant or landlord. It is an advantage to have had Mr. Haggard's view so distinctly stated.'

Doubtless there is much to be said for this opinion of Mr.

Foljambe's, although it seems to me to leave out the main point, the upkeep of the rural population. If Protection should effect this, certainly it would not be 'for the benefit of one class,' but for that of the entire nation. However this may be, although I may qualify my remarks quoted above by admitting it is possible that taxes might be put upon imported foodstuffs as part of some future and general scheme of protective duties, I do not believe that this will happen within any time which we need trouble to consider. Personally, in theory, I am a believer in Protection, and I think that great benefit would result directly or indirectly to Britain at large from the imposition of light duties on foodstuffs grown abroad.

Still here, as in other matters, I try not to allow personal opinions to blind my judgment, and, in the present case, my reason tells me, whatever may be the merits of the question, that human nature must change very much before town populations, which in England are in the vast majority, will consent to pay more for their food in order that land-dwellers or the Country may be benefited and the stamina of future generations increased. The hard struggle for existence which prevails in cities does not, I think, tend to foster such high altruism. Those who have hungry children want cheap food, and having once been given it, from whatever motive, while votes have weight they will not readily risk the boon. This, however, they may be forced to do, perhaps not because of Protection, but for the benefit of American and other millionaires, that is, if the Trust system continues to be tolerated. But of course these views on Protection and the possibility or otherwise of its re-adoption in England may be quite wrong. Sometimes I think they must be when I hear so many who are well qualified to judge declare that it is close at hand, even at our gates. It may chance, indeed, that my conclusions on this matter are as absolutely erroneous as were those of the late Sir James Caird when he prophesied that the change to Free Trade would 'bear good fruits' to English agriculture.

At Fountains Mr O H Wade, agent to the Marquess of Ripon, kindly showed me over the premises of the Skelldale Co-operative Dairy Society, Limited, which had then been in existence for about ten years. The capital of the Society was very small, and, so far as I can discover from the accounts, only about £120, representing half a crown or five shillings a share—I am not sure which—had been paid up at that date, although I understood that the market value of these partly paid shares was well over par. At the commencement of its operations the Society seems to have borrowed £500 from a Bank, all of which, I gather from the report, had been repaid with the exception of £7 6s. 1d. However this may be, the excess of assets over liabilities on December 31, 1900, was stated to amount to £478 15s 11d. During that year 223,110 gallons of milk had been received at the dairy, the average price of which paid to the co-operators was 6·96d. per gallon, or, reckoning in the added bonus of £211 0s. 11d. and the £50 repaid to the bank, 7 24d. a gallon. During this same year the total sales of butter, cream, cheese, new and separated milk, pigs, &c. amounted to £7,254 16s. 5d., and the profit to £289 16s. 11d.; a very satisfactory instance, I think, of the benefits of co-operation.

In this dairy, to which power is supplied by the same watercourse that the old monks used for their mill, every operation was carried on with great care and cleanliness. The milk, which was bought in at a fixed price per gallon, after weighing was elevated into a vat and pasteurised with steam at a temperature of 165 degrees. Next it was refrigerated and separated, the skim and cream being subsequently refrigerated for the second time. Before churning the cream was allowed to ripen for from two to three days, and after that operation the butter was worked up at a great circular table and then stored in the butter-room.

Mr. Wade told me that they had a demand for twice as much as they could supply, at very good prices, their produce being disposed of at a shop in Ripon, and at Wakefield, Leeds, Otley, and Knaresborough. The cheese, of which only a

small amount had then been manufactured, was made from whole milk and fetched a good profit. It was of a Stilton shape and Wensleydale character, and sold for 10*d* a pound. The milk was paid for monthly, then after expenses had been deducted, the surplus earnings went in bonus and dividend, divided in proportion to the number of gallons sent by each co-operative shareholder.

* Mr Wade said that, deducting the moorland, the estate covered 16,000 acres, and the farms varied in size from 600 to 50 acres, the majority being of about 300 acres. The smallest farmers, he added, lived on the moorside. The rents, which showed a reduction of from 15 to 17 per cent. all round, were about 30*s.* an acre for the best land, which would be one-third arable to two-thirds pasture. On the middle land, of which two-thirds were grass, they were about 22*s.* an acre, and on the hillside near the Moor, where it was all grazing, about 15*s.* an acre. There was a keen competition for farms, and the majority of the farmers made a living, while even at the prevailing prices, some were saving money, although there were others not so fortunate.

Wages were high, but farmers who paid a fair price could get labour. In that district some of the young people went away, but not all of them; indeed, the supply of labour was, he thought, increasing. Mr. Wade told me that the land on the fringe of the Moor, where I think the subsoil is sandstone, was devoted to the production of store cattle and sheep. On the rich bottom-lands stock were fed off with cake, and to the east of Ripon there was little dairying, but heifers were bred.

It will be noted that Mr. Wade's story of the district is on the whole very pleasant to read. Of course the fact that the great estate of which he spoke is in the hands of such a landlord as the Marquess of Ripon may account for much; but I am inclined to think that the presence of this very successful co-operative dairy has also a good deal to say in the matter. When, I wonder, will English farmers learn that in these difficult times of hard-earned and narrow profits

co-operation is almost necessary to success? Yet such is their obstinate temper, in too many instances at any rate, that it would seem they prefer the risk of individual failure to the prospect of a corporate success.

At Ripon I had a conference with ten of the leading farmers of the district: Colonel Kearsley, Chairman of the Ripon Agricultural Association; Mr. Joseph Spillman, Had-dock-stones, Markington, Chairman of the Skelldale Dairy Co., who farmed 800 acres in two farms; Mr. Joseph Cawthorne, Plumptre Studley, who farmed about 530 acres under Lord Ripon; Mr. John Spence, Mayor of Ripon, who farmed 700 acres in the parish of Hutton Conyers; Mr. William R. Storey, Secretary to the Hemp and Tow Spinners' Association; Mr. Wilkinson, Treasurer of the Agricultural Association, brewer and maltster; Mr. W. Gothorpe, who farmed 450 acres at Hutton Conyers; Mr. John Barley, of Rainton, who farmed 280 acres and had a very large family; Mr. Foster, of Markenfield Hall, who farmed 600 acres; and Mr. North, Secretary to the Association.

Mr. Spillman said that at Markington the soil was gravelly and would grow turnips, two-thirds of it being grass. A farmer there could make his rent and a living but not much money. He milked thirty-five cows, bred stock and just kept things going. Mr. Cawthorne said that at Plumptre the soil was gravel with a limestone subsoil, and subject to drought, which was detrimental to grazing, though two-thirds of it were in grass. Agriculture there had not been prosperous, nor was the outlook promising. There was little margin of profit between the lean cattle bought in and the beef sold out. Turnips that year were a bad plant and plagued by every pest. Labour was scarce and the boys all went to the towns. He could not put his hand on a boy in Studley if he wanted one. He thought that if things went on as they were many farmers would be obliged to go out of the business. He bought in Irish cattle and fattened them out. His sheep were Hampshire Downs crossed with Leicesters.

Mr. Spence said that at Hutton Conyers farming was not so bad in 1901 as it had been in 1900, nor did they suffer so much from a lack of labour as they did in many other districts. It would be better if they had more cottages as one means of keeping the men, although personally he could not complain on this score. His opinion was that the prosperity of towns would decrease and that people would then come back to the land, as indeed they would be obliged to do if there were a fit of bad trade. But even if they did come back they would be of very little use. In that district labour was the greatest difficulty.

Mr. Gothorpe, of Hutton Conyers, said he thought that farming was in a wretched state—nearly as bad as it could be. The labour question was a difficult one; but he had cottages and could always get men. If these were good they would keep the people on the land to some extent, but many of them were like hovels. Cottages with land attached were sought after eagerly, and his opinion was that where labouring men showed ability they should be allowed to keep a cow and acquire some interest in the land as an adjunct to their work. Farmers would not complain provided they could secure a good man, even if they were obliged to give up a piece of land to him. Here Mr. Spence said that he did not altogether approve of such a plan, as he thought that the labourers would want to be off to their own land in their master's time. Mr. Gothorpe replied that, speaking from experience, he believed that the men would learn to do what was right. He added that more accommodation buildings were wanted, as often the cattle were exposed to tempests in the fields, and their manure was washed away. Altogether he took a very black view of the condition of the industry.

Mr. John Barley said that the general outlook was not prosperous. At Rainton, where the land was half grass and half arable, they had only a 75 per cent crop that year. It was medium land, for the most part with a clay subsoil, and would breed or feed out cattle and sheep. On the freestone

formation in that district, which was barley and sheep land, the soil was kind and good. Farming was bad because the margin of possible profit was too small. A father ought to be able to earn enough to put each son out when he was twenty, but this he found impossible.

Mr. Foster, of Markenfield Hall, said that his farm was rather too dearly rented. He had few turnips that year owing to the bad season—not half a crop. He used to milk thirty-five cows, but gave them up owing to the prevalence of abortion and the labour difficulty. It was very hard to persuade yearly men to milk. He kept 200 ewes—Scotch crossed with Wensleydale. His land was on limestone, neither a good loam nor a clay; but Mr. Foster told me that if you got onto a plough of it in a wet time you would find it difficult to get out again. He thought that the principal reason of the competition for farms was that ‘fools were very common,’ and personally his only hope for the future was that someone might leave him money, which, however, he did not think probable.

Here Mr. Gothorpe added that many farmers were under-capitalised. The past good days had supplied the capital which was now being used up, a state of affairs that must tell in the future. Mr. Cawthorne said also—and the majority of those present expressed agreement with his remarks—that the general run of farmers did not make 1 per cent. upon their capital. They were, however, ‘sealed’ to the land, and would stick to it so long as they had a penny left, as their upbringing was against their taking to any other business.

These gentlemen informed me that the rents had fallen from 17 to 20 per cent. since the good times, and most of them seemed to think that the price demanded could not be grumbled at. I understood that Messrs. Barley, Gothorpe, and Cawthorne paid about 30s. an acre, but that the heavy land only commanded £1 an acre. The meeting was unanimously of opinion that a fall of another penny a pound in the price of beef would kill the grazing industry, also that frozen

meat ought to be labelled as such. Further, most of them thought that if boys did not go early on to the land they would not take to it at all, and were agreed that there should be some alteration in the system of rural education.

Mr William Storey said that his Hemp and Tow Spinners' Association was seeking to introduce a new feature into agriculture. They were anxious to support the growing of hemp in England. At present it was imported from Russia and Italy, but there was no reason why all that is required should not be produced at home, and his Association would be glad to give the preference to English-grown hemp. When grain was profitable it knocked out hemp, but now that corn was down it should be reintroduced, and he believed that its cultivation would pay farmers. The great difficulties in the way were the want of suitable machinery for 'scutching' the hemp, and technical knowledge on the part of farmers. Also there were the questions of collection and carriage. If, as I understood him to say, hemp from St. Petersburg could be delivered at Ripon at a transit rate of 28s. a ton, whilst the carriage of that purchased at Hilgay, in Norfolk, amounted to 31s. 6d. a ton, the latter of these problems is indeed formidable and another striking instance of the burden bound on to the back of English agriculturists by our great railway companies.

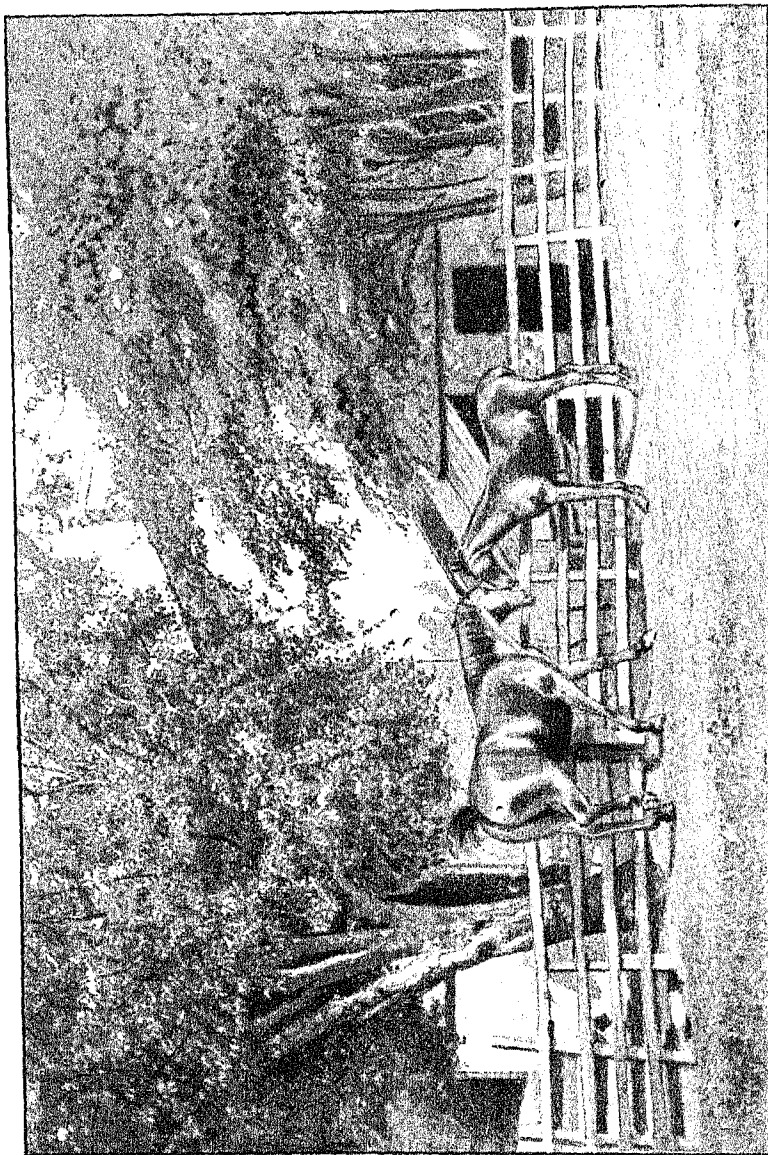
Mr Storey assured me that English hemp, when grown on fairly deep and fine soil, is excellent in quality. Indeed that year he had seen samples of home-raised hemp in the straw which measured six to eight feet in length, also parcels of scutched English hemp which were long, strong, and clean in the fibre, while that imported from Russia was often very inferior. He was most anxious that this question should be ventilated and brought under public notice, and I have much pleasure in giving him what assistance I can towards this end. My fear is, however, that the almost prohibitive rates of carriage from the places where the raw material would be grown to the manufacturing centres where it must be worked up, might stifle the infant industry.

More and more are we farmers obliged to depend upon purely local demand, since at the present prices it is well-nigh impossible for us to compete with foreign produce, carried at preferential rates, in markets lying more than a few miles away. Given an Agricultural Post combined with a properly organised Motor Service and all this would be changed. It is scarcely too much to say indeed that these innovations would well-nigh revolutionise the conditions of our rural industries.

Mr. Cawthorne said that the wages he paid at Studley were 16s. a week, with cottage and garden, forty stone of potatoes, a pint of new milk daily, 25s. over the month of harvest, with a pint of beer at ten, four, and six o'clock, and bread and cheese at four during that month. 'And that,' he added, 'don't satisfy them.'

Mr. Spillman's rates seemed to be very similar. Mr. Foster paid 16s. 6d. a week, with cottage, field of potatoes, daily pint of new milk, free wood and coal haulage, 30s. a week at harvest, and 25s. extra, but no hay money. Mr. Gothorpe paid £1 a week right through, with double wage in corn harvest. Mr. Barley's wages were much lower—15s. a week and 25s. a week at harvest. Mr. Spence's averaged £1 a week with perquisites. The general custom in the district seemed to be to hoe the turnips by piece-work.

Such is the substance of the information that I collected from these gentlemen at Ripon. Conferences of this nature, however, are not entirely satisfactory, since when several people are talking at once the investigator, who is a stranger in the land, must keep his head very clear and never suffer his mind to wander, lest he should confuse the facts presented, and possibly attribute to one gentleman the views of another. If I have committed this error in any instance I hope that I may be forgiven. As a means of collecting agricultural lore I prefer these gatherings, however, to a large dinner party, when a man bent upon such a mission must eat, drink, argue, listen, and store his memory all at once—a task which might well puzzle a Chief Justice.



I do not know that I can conclude my remarks upon this district better than by giving a short summary of the views of the Bishop of Ripon—with whom I had a very interesting interview—upon the subject of the exodus from the land and kindred topics. The Bishop was anxious that emphasis should be laid upon the fact that he had no claim to be an expert on such questions, but those who know his great ability and experience must judge of this matter for themselves.

He said that one sad feature of the times was the disappearance of landed proprietors from their homes, instancing districts where no resident families were left, and seemed to think that if the higher classes did not go so much to the towns those beneath them might not be so ready to follow their example. As it was, he could see no sign of the exodus ceasing. He did not consider, however, that it was only a question of wages, which were good in that county. A desire for a free life had much to do with it; also the fact that the countryside does not supply sufficient excitement and pleasure to suit the taste of the present generation.

He thought that this migration was nothing less than a national danger, commenting on the fact that something of the same sort happened in France before the Revolution, and in the Roman Empire before its fall. He was inclined to believe—although it was difficult to say how it could be done, and he did not approve of grandmotherly government or anything which would tend to destroy self-reliance—that the true remedial policy would be to give the people, or to put them in the path of obtaining, some real interest in the land. Of all interests, he added, that of personal possession is obviously the greatest. He was of opinion that some change is coming over the national character, that restlessness of spirit was a mark of the age, with a certain tendency towards hysteria, and that as the future of the country must depend upon national character, this was a serious symptom. At the same time things sometimes equalised

themselves in quite unforeseen and unexpected ways . therefore it was well not to be pessimistic—a conclusion with which all sensible men will agree

From Ripon I travelled to Cleveland—the fertile Vale of Cleveland as it is called, in the extreme north of the county, where we were the guests of Mr Wilson Horsfall, of Potto Grange, Northallerton. Mr Horsfall is a noted breeder of Cleveland bays, a race of horses which claims some mention. These Cleveland bays are of a stock so ancient that its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. In bygone generations, I am told, they were largely used to draw the coaches which carried mails and passengers from one end of Britain to the other. For this purpose, indeed, they must have been admirably suited, as they are strong, docile, and sure footed, if not very fast, capable also of bearing the strain of hard and continuous work.

A typical Cleveland bay is a long horse standing over a great deal of ground, which gives it the appearance of being somewhat slack in the loins. As its name denotes, it is invariably bay in colour, with black points. It is very kindly-natured and easy to break, and can, moreover, adapt itself to any sort of work. Thus on Mr. Horsfall's farm no other breed was used. His Clevelands ploughed, drew carts, harrowed, or did whatever else might be required, which duties, however, do not unfit them for service as carriage horses. As riding animals they are useless, being too slow for that purpose, although I think it probable that when our forefathers went down in full armour to tournament or war, they were not infrequently mounted on Cleveland bays, perhaps of a heavy stamp. It is certain that nothing lighter could have carried them and their iron trappings

A few years ago the breed sank to a low ebb, but of late it has been resuscitated to some extent—largely, I understand, through the efforts of Mr. Scarth Dixon, who was instrumental in starting the Cleveland Bay Stud Book. Now these horses may sometimes be seen drawing barouches

in London or elsewhere, and it is to be regretted that the existence of such useful animals, which can be bought at a moderate price, is not more widely known. Several gentlemen in Yorkshire, and one at least outside of it—Mr. Stephens in Wiltshire—have taken up the breed in earnest, and I hope that they will increase their studs and bring it more before the notice of the public. Already it is greatly appreciated abroad and in the Colonies, especially in South Africa, where it is much used to give substance to the light native horses

Indeed, the danger seems to be lest all the best of the animals should be lost to this country, since the foreign demand for the finest sires is very keen. Thus, when we arrived at Mr. Horsfall's, he had just sold several of them to go to Natal. Sir James Caird, whose valuable letters on English agriculture contributed to the 'Times' were published in book form in 1852, noted the same thing. In his chapter on the North Riding he says that formerly the Vale of Cleveland 'was celebrated for its cheese and horses, but the latter are now scarcely to be met with as a distinctive breed, the farmers having been tempted to part with their brood mares at high prices, and the best stock having thus in process of time been taken out of the country'

The country about Potto Grange is very beautiful, and the sight of the pale, gigantic ball of the autumn moon floating up beyond the mist clad vales was one which will not easily be forgotten, at any rate by myself. Standing by the ruined castle house near to the meadow, where once was the now vanished market town of Whorlton, the view is most striking. To the north-east, beyond the great plain, rises the peak of Roseberry Topping, and not far from it, a landmark for miles around, an obelisk erected to the memory of Captain Cook, who was born hard by. To the north-west is a great flat of fertile-looking land, while to the south and east stretches the long range of the bold, round-shouldered Cleveland Hills, their faces scarred by the grey dump-heaps from the abandoned jet workings which, owing to the

pressure of foreign competition and the change of fashion, it no longer pays to mine.

On these heaps, by the way, owing to the mineral oil with which they are saturated, nothing will grow; so there they remain, and must remain, ashen and unsightly blots amid the green of the mountain side.

Mr. Wilson Horsfall, who owns land in three districts in Yorkshire, devoted his farm at Potto to the breeding of the Cleveland bays that I have described. Also he raised pedigree Shorthorn cattle, of which he had a choice herd, among them a bull of high degree that enjoyed the proud distinction of having actually killed a man. He said that sixteen years before, when first he was agriculturally acquainted with Cleveland, things were much better than in 1901. Up to then the tenant farmers were doing well, and most of them had servants and, perhaps, a governess in the house. Since those days, however, instead of receiving lessons from the governess the girls had been obliged to learn how to wash and the boys to go upon the land, there to take the places of the labourers whom their fathers could no longer afford to pay. The difference was that then the sons could be put out upon farms of their own; now they must stop at home, as if they went away and deprived the parents of their services the household would be brought to difficulty and distress. As it was, even with the aid of their families, the small farmers were living but little better than agricultural labourers.

The labour, he said, was 30 per cent. dearer than it had been, and although the men were so expensive and independent it took three of them to accomplish the work that used to be done by two. In short, what the farmer and landlord had lost the labourer had gained. It was his day. It was almost impossible to find a young man in that district who could thatch or lay a fence, as all the sharpest and best went away, and the remainder did not care to become skilled workmen. This, Mr. Horsfall thought, was largely the fruit of education. In his opinion, it would be a

good thing if more freedom were given to boys in rural schools during the summer months, at which time he would like to see them apprenticed to the farmers. This system, he remarked, was more or less carried out in the industrial schools and reformatories, with the result that a good many of the boys educated in those institutions stayed upon the land. Doubtless, he added, it was true that the country bred the race and the towns destroyed the race. They were told that they should farm with more science. Well, it was very easy to talk about science in agriculture, but practice and science must go hand in hand. Without practice science was useless. Mr. Horsfall informed me that all the best of the Cleveland bays went abroad, as was the case with so much of the finest British stock, so that soon it might happen that they would have to go to foreign countries to buy their mares and sires.

In the course of my long journeyings throughout England, nothing has struck me more than the great power for good or evil that lies in the hands of the clergy in their respective parishes, a power which is by no means limited to matters spiritual. Readers of this book may remember the good work that is being done in the neighbourhood of Bewdley, in Worcestershire, by the Rev. Messrs Money-Kyrle and Eyre. Here, far away in Northern Yorkshire, I found a very similar instance of clerical energy. The Rev. J. L. Kyle, the Rector of Carlton-in-Cleveland and Faceby, which lie at a distance of a few miles from Potto, is an enthusiastic agriculturist and one who, by that best of all methods, example, has set himself to show his parishioners—of whom the bulk are small-holders—the way to make the most of their land.

Mr. Kyle asked me if I could see any harm in the fact of a clergyman spending his spare time in farming. I answered that I wished none of them did less wholesome things. In the case of Mr. Kyle, it is, moreover, clear that agriculture does not exhaust his enterprise, seeing that he has entirely rebuilt his parish church, with

the result that, although it is small, I know of no other new church which surpasses it in excellence of design or workmanship. Still, the clergyman who farms must expect criticism, although the general judgment of the community is perhaps summed up in the words with which one of Mr. Kyle's parishioners concluded an argument on the matter: 'Well, I say he is a useful sort of man, our parson—if you have aught to sell he'll buy it!'

In Mr. Kyle's opinion the small-holders in his parish and district were doing well, there being a ready and even an eager market in Stockton and Middlesbrough for all that they could produce. This was proved by the fact that some of them had been able to repay borrowed money and by the numerous applications to take at a high rent any tenancy that fell vacant. Thus one widow hired eighteen acres at £54 a year, which was more than she could manage. In order to assist this person Mr. Kyle had taken some of the land off her hands at £3 5s the acre. For another holding of nine acres £30 was paid; this, however, was all grass. A third tenancy had become vacant through death. There was a great demand for it, and Mr. Kyle said that he could name several men who would be glad to take it at an advanced rent.

With the large farms the case was strangely different. Thus we were shown one of 340 acres of a similar quality of land to that of the small-holdings, which had just been let at 26s. the acre, although the grass park was said to be the best pasture in the district. If this farm were cut up into fifty-acre lots it would, I was informed, easily fetch 45s. the acre. But here came the difficulty: the buildings on it cost not long ago between four and five thousand pounds, and if it were divided these would be useless. Perhaps, however, this will be done some day, since in all these districts I found, wherever it was at all possible, that the general tendency seemed to be to take land in lots sufficiently small to enable a man to work his holding with his family without the aid of outside labour. This means

that in many places the labour question is killing out the large farmers.

The result of Mr. Kyle's observations was that these small-holdings keep the people on the land and create a sturdy and hard-working class who do not drink, and who do produce large families, which are an assistance to them in their daily tasks. As a result the census shows that the population of this village has not decreased. Some of these farmers in Carlton, among them Mr. Kyle himself, sent in their milk to Stockton, while others made butter, which commanded a very good price, and fed calves on the skim.

Of course, as I have said, it is the neighbourhood of these excellent markets that makes small-holdings more profitable here than they can be in many other places. Indeed, the remark holds good of the entire district of Cleveland, of which the produce is consumed in the great manufacturing cities. By way of compensation to this advantage, however, the presence of these cities and their incessant demand for young and healthy men to work in the mines and factories, causes the labour question to be as pressing here as it is in any part of Yorkshire. Indeed, on some farms labourers can scarcely be obtained except at prices which may be called prohibitive.

Mr. William Barraclough, who had been forty years schoolmaster at Swainby, told me that about 70 per cent. of the young people went away. Some, however, stayed, and he thought it probable that most of these were the sons of small-holders, of whom there were a good many in Swainby and Scugdale. Mr. Skilbeck, whom I saw at the same time, and who for forty years had occupied a farm of nearly 200 acres in the Whorlton district—I think it lay in Potto itself—confirmed this view. He declared that small-holdings would keep the people, but if they had no interest in the land they went. He said that very few of the young men took any pride in their work; still of labourers there were enough if they were fairly used and

paid, although it was difficult to find extra hands. The wages were about 11s. a week with, or 20s. to 25s. without meat.

In the old days farmers had been prosperous, and most of the Dale was like a garden; but now all this was changed. Still they could make a fair living, but very few were laying by money. Much land had gone out of corn and into grass; thus, he used to grow forty acres of wheat, but in 1901, he grew only ten. Formerly the women would come out to work for ninepence or a shilling a day, but it was no longer possible to get them 'for love or money'; indeed Mr. Barraclough said that he had not seen a woman working in the Dale for twenty years. Both of them thought that it would be better for the land and the lad if the present system of education were varied in some fashion which would give youths a chance of becoming attached to the soil. Mr. Skilbeck's rent, which used to be 36s., had, I believe, fallen to 26s. the acre; but the average for the Cleveland district he put at £1, the prices ranging from £2 an acre for the best land down to 10s. an acre, with moor-rights thrown in, at places like Bilsdale. Mr. Skilbeck grew potatoes and roots, bought in and bred a few sheep, which were Scotch crossed with Leicester tups, and fed out all his beasts, some on grass and some during the winter in yards. I understood that he worked his farm with no help beyond that of his own family.

Walking over Mr. Horsfall's land, in addition to the Cleveland Bay stud, to which it is chiefly devoted, I saw some splendid pedigree Shorthorns. From these a certain amount of butter was made and sold at Stockton, the male calves, which were reared on the skim, going out at two years as 'stirks,' that is, steers, to be fattened in the south. The heifers were kept and bred from until they were four or five, at which age they were sold to dairymen, who milked them and either bred from them again or marketed them as mature cows for fattening. Shorthorns, by the way, are the stock of this district.

Mr Horsfall explained to me that it used to be the custom to bare-fallow the land every fourth year, but that now much of it was laid away to grass instead. Here I saw, for the first and probably the last time, land being brought into grass in a fashion that is no longer practised, though I have learned from Mr. Clare Sewell Read that it was common in his youth. On the face of the field to be treated, after it has been cleaned, sods of good old turf are set in the soil a distance of a foot or two and left till they run together, and thus form a permanent pasture of grasses that are natural to the neighbourhood. This plan has advantages, especially in a wet climate, but of course a sharp drought is apt to kill the new-laid sods, also rooks are great enemies to them, as they turn them over in search of worms. Mr. Horsfall showed us a farm of sixty-eight acres which he had let to a small-holder—I think his own bailiff—for £70 a year. He said that this man would make a living out of it, running it with his own labour, whereas to himself it would have meant a loss or £100 a year. Here the second crops on the clover leys were very good, as were the oats, and there was an excellent plant of seeds.

Mr. Dobson, of Dromanby House, Northallerton, a land-owner and farmer, told me that the men who were farming well and who held about 200 acres still had money to invest; but these all helped their business by dealing, or letting out traction engines, or other expedients. Small-holders, however, were crippled by the high rents. If a man paid £36 for nine acres of land it did not leave him much for himself. Indeed, what he saved by doing his own labour was absorbed in this fashion. Most of the farms in his district were half arable and half pasture, and took £10 an acre capital. Labourers could be found by paying them, really good men commanding £26 a year, with lodging and all food found, but girls could not be found.

As an instance of the decrease of prosperity among farmers in this part of Yorkshire, Mr. Dobson said that in the sixties when men wanted money on loan they went for

it to the Bilsdale folk, but now he did not believe that £5 could be borrowed in the Vale. The soil in his neighbourhood was a medium clay, and gave an average return of forty bushels of wheat and sixty of oats to the acre. During the past fifteen years he had laid down nearly two-thirds of his land to grass. He reared thoroughbreds for racing, which were sold at the Doncaster sale, one of his young things having fetched as much as £2,000, also he bred pedigree Shorthorns, but for these there was no longer a foreign demand, the ports in Argentina, which was their best market, being closed against imported stock. All his male calves were sold as bulls at an average price of £25, which was a better business than keeping them for bullocks. He also bred Wensleydale sheep which, he said, had a long wool with a finer staple than the Leicester, and did well on strong grass land. They went into Scotland to be crossed with the moorland ewes. He thought that the most successful people in the neighbourhood were the small-holders, who did well. Cleveland, he added, had always been a country of small-holders, which was a reason why the labour question was not acute. Labourers, he stated, could always be hired by those who paid for them.

Mr. Charles A. Emerson, of Deighton, where he is the principal landowner, told me that he thought farmers in his neighbourhood were doing better than they were. Rents, however, had come down 60 per cent., and fee-simple values in proportion, although land was easier to sell than it had been. The average rent of heavy agricultural land there was about 12s. 6d. an acre, but a good deal of it had been laid down to grass and some was given up to rabbits. There were applicants for farms, but as a rule they had not enough capital, and, generally speaking, the class of tenant procurable was not so good as it used to be. A good many of the old squires in the district had vanished, having been bought out by men who had made money in commerce. Labour was hard to find and, except in the case of the older men, not good when it was found. Of cottages

they had as many as they could let, for the young people went away and the rural population was shrinking. He could not say that he saw anything bright to look forward to in the future.

Mr. John Robb, whom I saw on his farm, which lies about ten miles from Northallerton and four from Thirsk, at Skipton-on-Swale, had in hand no less than 1,200 acres, of which, I understood, all, or nearly all, was his own property. Of this land two-thirds were arable and one-third pasture. His shift was roots, of which he grew 100 acres—barley (with seeds), corn, and roots again. He bred no cattle, but bought in about 120 Irish beasts and Shorthorn stirks out of Westmorland and Cumberland in spring and at the back end of the year, and fed them out in the stalls. Of ewes he kept 210—Wensleydales crossed with Oxford Downs. The rent in his neighbourhood he put at 27s. 6d. an acre for the best lands, down to 12s. for the very light lands. The district on the whole he considered a good one, some of the grazing land by the river being excellent.

Mr. Robb said that the quality of the labour was falling off. The young people went away, but he thought that in this matter there would be a reaction. Small-holders with families were doing better than anybody else, as they ran the land with their own labour, and it might come to farming in that neighbourhood being carried on by this class. He paid his shepherds 18s., and his ordinary hands 16s., with cottage, garden, manure, milk if he had it to spare, and some land. They wanted a rise of 1s. a week, but he did not consider that the land could bear a heavier wage. There was a demand for farms; thus he could let his, but if he did so the land would go back. Many of the new tenants economised to the detriment of the soil; some of them did not even plough their land, they 'dragged' it. He thought that owing to the cost of labour and the low prices the position was about as bad as it well could be. Farms had fallen in rent and the industry as a whole was going downhill, feeding stuffs and stores were dear, while the price of

produce was cheap. The view that he took of the future was gloomy.

Driving to Colonel I'Anson's, of Howe Hall, Thirsk, we passed the village of Carlton Miniott, in the Vale of Mowbray. Here I was informed in September that there had been no rain to speak of since the month of May, yet wheat was a good crop, and the mangolds, that drought-resisting root, of which here, as in many other parts of England, the acreage is increasing year by year, were also good. Oats were fair, and I saw a considerable breadth of potatoes, mostly of the Sutton's Abundance variety. The cottages in this district seemed to be good and sufficient. Not far from Skipton-on-Swale we passed from light potato land to strong soil, of which about two-thirds seemed to be arable to one-third pasture. The rent of this land, I understood, averaged about £1 the acre. Here, also, I saw a field which had been cut up into allotments; now these were abandoned, and it was cultivated in the ordinary fashion. The Swaleside lands hereabouts were very good grass and run up gradually into the weak sand lands above.

Colonel I'Anson, who was, I believe, President of the National Sheep-breeders' Association, said that in his opinion the outlook was bad. Sheep had been their stand-by, and now these were failing them. He told me that a member of the New Zealand Government, whom he had met not long before, had assured him that the trade in that colony's mutton was but in its infancy, and for this and other reasons Colonel I'Anson had no faith in the future. For twenty-five years past the industry, he said, had been going back steadily, prices growing worse and labour more difficult to obtain and manage. His own men whom he had employed for years were good, but for the most part the quality of the labour was bad. He had one reliable lad who would stay with him, but the rest were all going away. He did not believe that allotments had any deterrent effect upon this exodus, but in the establishment of small men with their families on the land he did believe. The selling value of land in the

neighbourhood had, he said, fallen very much, and rents were down about 25 per cent. There were applicants for farms, but some of these were land-skinners.

I walked over Colonel I'Anson's farm of 400 acres, most of which was strong land and somewhat burnt up, very much so indeed when compared with that in the neighbourhood of Potto. Here I first made personal acquaintance with the blue-faced Wensleydale sheep, of which the points are size, lean mutton, and long, fine-stapled wool, which is in great demand even at the present time. Colonel I'Anson had been bid 11s 9d. a stone for his, but was holding for 12s. He said that once he had kept his wool for fifteen years in the hope of better prices. Whether or no he got them I do not know, but this seems doubtful.

The Wensleydale lambs have a curious feather on their legs which they lose after the second shear. The gimmers were worth 50s. for mutton, or if sold for stock about 55s. Here there was a flock of shearling Wensleydale tups, fine animals of eighteen months old, with very curly fleeces. I think that these were some of the most handsome sheep which I have seen in England, and their breed was the same that Colonel I'Anson's father kept sixty years before. His stock were Herefords, which he had taken up on account of the high price of Shorthorns. He bought them in as stores at the end of May in Shrewsbury market at an average price of £10 apiece, and expected to get them out before Christmas at £19 or £20. *They seemed to do very well upon this soil.* Once he had bred hunters, but gave them up, for he found that only one out of three made any money.

While driving back to Thirsk our coachman, whose name I think was George Close, informed me that as a boy of twelve he received £1 9s. a year and his keep, and as a labourer his pay was 9s. a week, without food or lodging. In those days, he added, a really good man earned £9 a year and his meat, all of which, he remarked, was changed now.

Another expedition that I made from Northallerton was to Leyburn, in Wensleydale, where I was anxious to

learn something of the general conditions and of the cheese-making for which it is famous. About Burton Constable and Spennithorne the traveller can see the dales threading the hills in all directions, and above them heights crowned with heath and firs. From Leyburn itself looking westward from the high ground over hidden Coverdale, Penhill, and Hawes, the Dale stretches up from a great expanse of flat land dotted with trees, like an African plain with its mimosa thorns, to the Penhill range, in the midst of which stand Middleham and its ancient castle. Below lies the Vale, broad and smiling, lined out with fencing walls, and rising gently to the swelling, purple slopes of the Pen Hills that in the shadow seemed almost black with heather. In all this beauteous and peaceful scene the eye could scarcely find a field of ploughed land. everywhere was grass and yet more grass, until its green was lost in the purple of the heather.

Mr. Dent, a member of the firm that has, I understood, been established here for over a century, and who was said to know as much about Wensleydale and its cheeses as anybody in Leyburn, told me that cheese-making was the great industry of the Dale, which is also famous for its cattle. Everyone who kept two cows would make cheese, although not so much was turned out as formerly, as a good deal of milk was sent to Liverpool. The cheeses, of which he showed me a great number in his shop, vary from 6 lbs. to 16 lbs. in weight, and are mostly of the Stilton shape—something of that flavour too—with a difference. Mr. Dent told me that there were few large farms in the district, and that the average size was about 200 acres. Of arable there was but little, not five per cent. indeed. Nearly all the fences were of stone, and the enclosures generally measured from two to five acres.

Mr. Edward Alderson, of the Bolton Arms Hotel, also a gentleman of great experience, told me that on the whole he thought the local farmers were doing badly, and that unless they could get along with the help of their own families

they could not get along at all. Labour for milking was almost unprocurable, and neither lads nor lasses would take service in the country. Farmers even went to Middlesbrough to try to hire lads. The wages were from 18s. to 19s. a week, with some privileges, such as a house and forty stone of potatoes. For large farms the demand was not great, but there was much competition for small-holdings, although the rent of these was far higher. Thus Mr Alderson said that ten acres would cost a small-holder £20 a year, while 300 acres might be hired by the large man for under, or at best for a trifle over, as many pounds. In addition to the cheesemaking the farmers bred and sold out stores, as this was a raising rather than a fattening district, at any rate west of Leyburn. In conclusion Mr. Alderson said that generally he did not consider the agricultural outlook in that district to be promising.

Mrs. Graham, the wife, I think, of Mr. John Graham, a farmer, was so kind as to show me the process of the manufacture of Wensleydale cheeses, of which she produces many. Fresh milk, in her case a hundred gallons, having been brought in and the rennet added, it is allowed to stand from twenty to thirty minutes, after which the curd is broken down and left to settle. When it has stood a while in the same vessels the whey is strained off through coarse and fine cloths. These processes take place during the morning. Subsequently the curd is again broken up, and after one ounce of salt has been added to four pounds of curd, it is wrapped in a coarse cloth and put into a wooden tub without a bottom called a vat, which vat is set in a press. Here the process seems to differ from that of the manufacture of Stilton, which the reader will remember is not pressed. On the second morning the portions of curd are transferred into fine cloths and replaced in the press, where the pressure is continued till the evening, when, so far as its making is concerned, the cheese is finished.

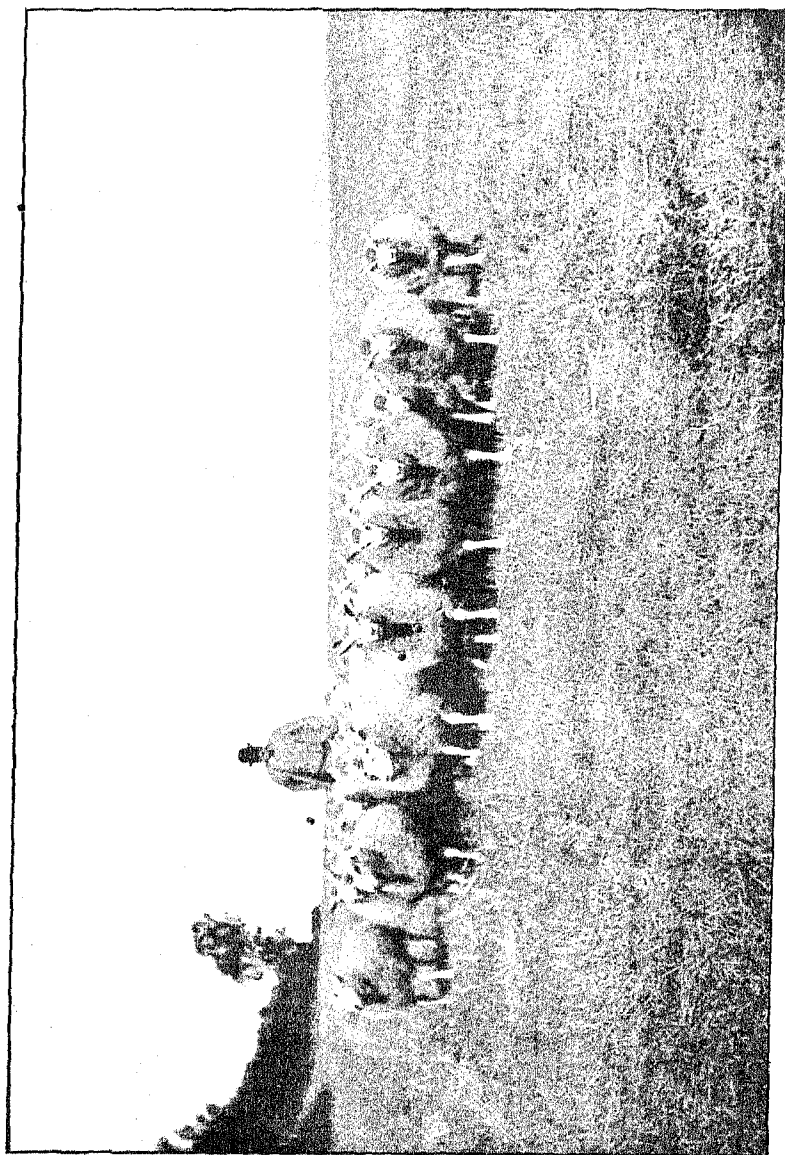
Mrs. Graham informed me that although the work was very hard it paid well. There were, however, considerable

difficulties connected with the milking, and complete cleanliness and care in every particular were essential to success. She said that the danger was that the trade in Wensleydales would be spoilt by the many bad cheeses that were put upon the market under that name. Such cheeses when tasted by consumers set them against the brand.

The Hon W. Orde-Powlett, whom we saw at Leyburn, confirmed what I had heard as to the tightness of labour in that district.

Mr. Fairburn, who farmed at Hutton Bonville, five miles from Northallerton, told me that the land there was strong. He reared cattle, grew a little wheat and a good deal of barley, which gave an average return of four quarters to the acre. All his heifer calves were kept for cows, and the rest he fed out, buying but few stores. He bought in sheep, but did not breed them. Turnips he could grow, but to do so his land must be well worked. He said that 'since rents came down we've just made things tie, but the labour is going to kill the pig,' i.e. to destroy the industry. He had been in the habit of hiring men, but men were no longer to be hired. He could not get any, and thought that he would be left with nobody but his son. The lads and lasses all went away, there was scarcely one left in agriculture in his neighbourhood. Some people were more fortunate. He meant those who had a family and succeeded in keeping them at home. If it had not been for his son's help he must have given up farming himself.

Rents, he said, were down a half or more on strong lands, and now stood at under £1 an acre. Still there were applicants for farms, men who would risk a bit and borrow a bit in order to get in, and sons of farmers whom their fathers put on to the land. To him, however, the question of where the capital came from was a mystery. On the other hand some people were beginning to grow tired of it, chiefly owing to the labour difficulty. He instanced a man in that neighbourhood who held 1,000 acres and had not more than six hands on the place. This gentleman was



MR. ALLISON'S LEICESTER SHEEP

giving up one 400-acre farm near by. Mr Fairburn thought the only thing to do would be to lay the land away to grass and graze it with cattle and sheep. He added that he could not look forward to the future with any confidence.

Travelling from Potto to Nunthorpe we passed along the base of the Cleveland Hills. Here the breadths of grass and stubble stretched away, always tending upwards, till they culminated in wooded slopes that in their turn were lost in the clean-cut lines of the summits of the moorlands, which extend thence for some sixteen miles to Helmsby. At Nunthorpe once more we met Mr. Scarth Dixon, who had most kindly undertaken to be our guide to Saltburn, and there to show us over his own land. With him was Mr. T. Curry, jun., agent to the large estate of Mr. A. J. Dorman, of Grey Towers, Nunthorpe, and other gentlemen.

Here most of the soil was clay, which produced wheat, oats, and barley, but more barley than anything else. The sheep lands were on the hillsides, and about a third of the area of the majority of the farms was pasture. The farmers grazed and bred cattle, nearly all of them selling milk in Middlesbrough and elsewhere. The average size of farm seemed to be from 120 to 180 acres, the average selling value of land from £30 to £35 the acre, and the average wage about £1 a week, while the rents on the Grey Towers estate, over much of which we drove, varied from 14s. 6d. to 28s. 6d. an acre.

There were also a good number of small-holders in the neighbourhood who hired a few fields, kept a cow or two, and worked for the farmers in hay time and harvest. Mr. Curry said that this was a very satisfactory state of affairs, and that, to a certain extent, they relied on these small-holders for labour. On that property there was, he informed me, no grass that would feed out cattle. It was all grazing land, and they bred calves and fattened them at two years old in the yards. Also they grew as many turnips as possible. After visiting various farms, including the home farm of Mr. Dorman, on whom I called, we went to see Mr. T. Curry,

of Morton Carr, who, if my memory serves me, was the father of Mr. T. Curry, jun., agent to Mr. Dorman.

This was a fine farm of 500 acres, to which Mr. Curry, senior's, grandfather came in 1810. The fields were mostly large, with a peat subsoil, and had been drained by the tenant, the fences low and neat, and the crops of wheat and oats on these cool bottom lands which the drought had suited, very heavy. A feature of the place was the large stacks; thus I saw four in the yard that contained in them the produce off seventy acres of land. Mr. Curry, jun., said *that*, taking the district through, the farmers were prosperous, paying rent, interest, and making a good living. At the last audit on Mr. Dorman's estate there were no complaints and the season of 1901 had been good in Cleveland. Indeed, they harvested the best crops won for years, as the dry weather had suited them. In the wet seasons, however, his father had lost £500 a year for eight years in succession. Now their land was well drained, and even in a wet time they could ripen the corn. -

The farms on these heavy clay lands averaged about 120 to 200 acres in size, and Mr. Curry said that the small men on the small farms were doing well, although they must work hard. They seemed to have no trouble with labour, chiefly, I gathered, owing to the influx of Irishmen, of whom on this farm they had thirteen living in a bothy, in addition to three Englishmen living in cottages. The wages were £1 a week, with house and garden (for the English labourers, I suppose), sixty stone of potatoes, and beer three times a day in harvest and haysel. They had markets in the big towns for everything they liked to send in, and kept thirty-two cows in milk. All roots were fed to cattle in the sheds. The cows they bought, milked them for two or three years, and sold them out as beef, selling the calves also at a standing price of about 35s. a head. Of sheep, as the land would not carry them permanently, they had a 'flying flock' of 100 ewes, bought in during October and sold out with their lambs in the following summer.

Altogether Mr. Curry's account of the local agricultural conditions was the most cheerful that I had heard for a long while, but to some extent doubtless this was due to the recent dry seasons, and still more to the eager market furnished by the great manufacturing city of Middlesbrough, which lay close at hand.

The view from the steep side of Ormesby Bank on the road to Saltburn was in its way very impressive. Below lay a great plain, and beyond it Middlesbrough draped in a veil of mist above which towering chimneys poured out volumes of thick smoke. In Eston, to the north-east, were yet more chimneys, all their dense lines of smoke streaming down wind like long black flags from the trucks of unseen ships, until at nightfall these pennons vanish and of a sudden the points of the tall masts take fire and flare unceasingly. So weirdly do they flame and waver there among the shadows, that almost one might imagine them titanic torches set upon the Infernal slopes to light the spirits of dead men along the ways of Doom.

At the township of Marske, which is situated near the sea and almost among the ironworks, we saw Mr and Mrs Mark Hall in their comfortable house at Rye Hills, a couple who belonged to that generation of Yorkshire farmers which is now passing away. Mr. Hall said that farmers were doing pretty well in that district, but that practically they had given up growing wheat. On his holding of 400 acres, which, I think, he took from Lord Zetland, although of this I am not sure, he bred and fed stock, sending milk to the towns daily. Forty years before, his land, which was strong, used to be a wheat and bean farm. Then they grew ninety acres of wheat, a few turnips, and a little barley; but in 1901 the chief crops were turnips, barley, and seeds. His course was turnips, barley, clover, oats, and if they grew any wheat they took beans to follow. Lord Zetland gave a rebate of 15 per cent. each half-year, and some tenants received more. It used to be 25 per cent.

Mr. Hall told me that a great deal of land in this dis-

tract had gone away to grass. That soil, if well done, would make a good bottom in eleven years, but if badly done this took twenty years. To succeed there grass must be laid down properly. During the past two years they had been badly off for labour, and could hardly get the corn stooked; but he had three sons, who, as I gathered, gave him assistance. He kept four married labourers and some Irishmen, but said that after staying a few years the lads went off to the mines. The eight hours' shift in force in these mines made the labour question difficult on the land. Sometimes the miners would come out to help, but they knew nothing of agricultural work, and the young men did not care to learn. Cowmen were hard to get, as they must do Sunday work, and extra labour cost 4s. a day. To a hind he paid 18s. a week with a house, garden, fifty stone of potatoes, milk, and loan of a horse and cart to lead his coals. Also if a man fell ill they continued to pay his wages.

He did not consider that the general run of farmers were making more than a living, nor did he think the prospect very good; indeed he wished that his lads had not taken to the land. Clydesdale and Shire horse-breeding, which they all practised, had, however, been successful. Mr. Hall thought that the Clydesdales suited these clays better than the Shires, and that the improvement of the stamp in Cleveland during the past fifteen years was wonderful. There was a really good market for four-year-olds, which fetched up to £60 or more; indeed he had just sold one for £70. His practice was to work them on the farm from two and a half to four years of age and then put them on the market. Mr. Hall was of opinion that the production of useful horses was one of the most profitable industries left to agriculturists in Cleveland. The rents in that district, he added, varied from 17s. to 27s. the acre.

At Saltburn I had a very interesting interview with Mr. J. W. Clarke of Guisborough, I believe one of the most experienced land agents and managers in Yorkshire, and with

Mr. Thomas Petch, of Barns Farm, Skelton, whose holding I had visited on the previous day. Mr. Petch held 550 acres, of which 400 were grass, and bred all his own stock, beasts, horses, sheep, and pigs, as his, he said, was a breeding farm. He kept seventeen or eighteen dairy Shorthorn cows, and 200 improved Leicester ewes, selling out the lambs fat in May. Also he had a few Cleveland Bay and Clydesdale horses. His heifers he bred from, getting rid of them after the third calf, and selling out the steers as fat beasts. On his 150 acres of arable he grew twenty of swedes, and ten of potatoes. His farm, I should add, looked very well.

Mr. Clarke said that rents in that neighbourhood varied from 20s. to 30s. an acre. It was an exceptional district owing to the iron trade and the ready market for all produce, especially for straw and hay. He thought that the tenant farmers of the neighbourhood had been much helped by the great landlords, who were many of them rich men. On some estates money made out of the mines was very freely spent. 'The land,' he said, 'has been manured with ironstone.' He pointed out that farmers were unsuited for any other profession, and that the farmer's life had many advantages which ought to be taken into consideration. I shall not quote Mr. Clarke's views further at present inasmuch as since then he has most kindly furnished me with them in writing in a document that will demand attention.

Mr. Petch thought that farmers had lost capital, and that farming was not a 'paying game'; he added that had it not been for the fact that his landlord was so good, he would not have continued in the business, which was 'no use.' Also he hung on because he liked it and in the hope that he might get some of his money back one day. He knew men who would go out at once if they were able to turn their hand to anything else. The labour, he said, was difficult to find and very expensive, £1 a week with milk, house, and potatoes—wages that the land could not bear. He employed three Irishmen to each of whom he had paid 26s. a week for five weeks, and how, he asked, was he to get

produce out of his farm sufficient to satisfy such wages? When men could earn 5s. or 6s. in the mines, how could they be expected to stay upon the land; and what wonder was it if lads of seventeen or eighteen drifted away? Twenty years before one man used to marshal a score of women hoeing turnips, but now where were the women? Rents, Mr. Petch added, had fallen from 17 to 20 per cent. in that district.

Mr. Clarke remarked that some farmers succeeded, and instanced a draper's assistant who had taken to farming, quadrupled his holding, put out two sons, and generally was quite satisfied with his lot. To this Mr. Petch replied dryly that he knew the man, and that he had 'married a lady with money.' Of the circumstances of this particular case of course I cannot speak, but I may mention it as a curious fact that in quite a number of examples in the course of my travels through England, I have discovered that farmers who were mentioned to me as especially successful have met with similar good fortune. More than once also I have heard that the lady no longer possessed the money. Like the ironstone in Cleveland it had gone to 'manure the soil.'

As I consider them of great value, and as they dwell on a side of the case which is rarely presented now-a-days. I quote here the notes on Yorkshire agriculture which have been sent to me by Mr. Clarke. In these notes I have made a few clerical alterations only and some unimportant omissions, the latter with the object of saving space.

NOTES ON AGRICULTURE IN YORKSHIRE.

I have much pleasure in sending you a few notes on the above subject. They are the outcome of my experience in agricultural matters extending over a period dating from 1860 up to the present time, therefore anything I may say is the result of actual practical experience, as I have been working amongst the owners, the occupiers of land, and the agricultural labourers during the whole of that time without any intermission.

As far as possible, I will deal with the various headings in the order you name.

Past and Present Conditions in Yorkshire.—The present position is peculiar, because we are just recovering from a great number of years of depression, the cause of which is, in my mind, to be traced to two reasons, the first being a long series of low prices and the second the great and increased difficulty that has occurred of late years in getting an economical and sufficient supply of labour.

With regard to the former I do not altogether blame the condition of agriculture for the bad prices, for although we hear very often that rents ought to be lowered to meet them my experience is that they have been, and always are, lowered when necessary, and the person who rents land has no one but himself to blame if he takes it at too high a rent.

As regards the labour question, it has certainly been one of very great difficulty, the supply short and the quality inferior. Nothing could have saved agriculture in this particular direction except the fact that a great improvement has taken place in mechanical appliances, which have to a very large extent met the difficulty. I therefore come to the conclusion that although great difficulties have arisen in farming operations, they have to some extent been met, and the depression is actually and steadily decreasing and will eventually disappear. History repeats itself; there have been periods of greater depression than those we have lately gone through. I think landlords have more than done their duty, especially in the North of England, by carrying out permanent improvements in every direction, which have tended to a very great extent to balance the difficulties we had to meet.

I do not think farmers have *made* money of late years, still there is an increasing demand for mixed farms of moderate size. I do not know of any good land that is unlet, and nearly all the farms in the open market command decidedly good rents, which show an increase upon those lowered a few years ago. The cause of this is difficult to see. The general reason, however, to my mind is that the farming element is very strong, and there will always be in England men who prefer to find their occupation in life on the land in sufficient numbers to meet the supply. Farms are very good to let, and, with the exception of unusually large ones, which are always difficult to deal with, there is a greater demand than the supply can meet. People with a capital large enough to take a big farm are certainly not to be found, because men possessing, say, from £5,000 to £10,000 prefer to put it in some commercial concern which gives them an opportunity of making a large return

upon their outlay or living upon it without risk. I do not know, however, that the change in this respect is greater now than it ever was. There may be very good tenants who come under the designation of gentlemen farmers who have abandoned agriculture as a means of living, but this class was never one to depend upon, and merely arose, and will wane at times, when there is a considerable wealth of surplus capital in the country.

I consider that, taking the state of the land generally, it is better cultivated now than it was many years ago. There is perhaps a slight falling off to what it was twenty years ago in some districts, but the general system of cultivation has improved and rents are fairly maintained. The loss of rent in Yorkshire has been by no means so great as in other counties, and it has been recovered to a considerable extent of late by tenancies changing hands. I attribute the loss a great deal to the fact that farmers as well as others live at a higher rate and maintain a different position socially from what they did thirty years ago. The same may be said of the labourer; and as the rate of wages is so largely increased, the farmer cannot afford to give the landlord so much rent as he could when both the cost of living and the rate of wages were very much less.

I need not say that throughout the whole of England every class have during the last thirty years increased their style of living very materially, and money consequently is of much less value. This seems to apply more especially to the farmer or occupier of land and the labourer, with the result I have given. I am inclined to think that any loss that has occurred in the rental value of land is attributable more to this fact than to any other.

Outlook.—I think on the whole the outlook is hopeful, and at the present moment rents are well and promptly paid.

Labour.—The labour question I admit is getting more difficult every day, but my own opinion is that the rate of wages has got about as high as it can go, and it is more likely that a reaction will set in with a tendency to lower wages than that they will increase. In England when you do not quite get the value of your outlay there generally seems to be a reaction, and I am bound to say the rate of wages paid in these departments of agriculture is more than it is intrinsically worth, especially when you consider the inferiority of the work you get. This remark applies to every class of labour connected with farming operations and to all estate work. At the present moment there is a very serious difficulty in

getting experienced men who are thoroughly clever at all the various classes of farm and estate work

Farming generally.—Farmers have altered their system of husbandry in many parts by laying down a great deal of land to grass. This, of course, has been done largely with the assistance of their landlords, also they have grown more root crops than they used to do, and instead of growing so much wheat have gone in largely for barley, a crop not supposed in olden days to grow well on strong land. They have also, with the assistance of covered sheds and buildings, kept a larger head of all kinds of stock. I know many farms where the building accommodation has been more than doubled during the last thirty years, and where even now they are hardly sufficiently equipped to meet the changes in this respect.

Cottages—As regards cottages in Yorkshire, and speaking generally for the North of England, these have been very much improved, and there is little, if any, complaint to be made of them. My opinion is that landlords have met the question very fairly. With the many local authorities that have arisen whose duty it is to look into these matters, it is almost impossible for a landlord to avoid putting his cottages into order, even if he wishes to do so, and few are to be found on well-managed estates where the sanitary arrangements are not up to date. At the present moment the cost of building cottages is absolutely prohibitive to allow of their being erected with any view other than to meet the necessity for them. However much they may be required, it is quite impossible for the occupants to pay a rent, even out of the high wages paid, that would yield more than two per cent. upon the cost.

Financial States of Landlords, Tenants, and Labourers.—As regards the financial state of the three persons who are interested in the soil and who have to live out of it I believe that the landlords or owners are those who have suffered most.

The tenant farmers have suffered to a certain extent; they, however, have had it in their hands to what is called 'cut their loss,' as they are not obliged to continue a tenancy that is unprofitable. A landlord, however, must stick to his land or run the risk of a forced sale.

As regards the labourer, he certainly is receiving a great deal more money now than he ever has done since his services were such an essential factor in agricultural operations; but I very much doubt whether he is saving more money now than he did twenty or thirty years ago, when wages were less, and I cannot

think that the saving element is quite so strong now as it was in those days. My own experience is that when the agricultural labourer was not receiving such good wages years ago he had more spare money than he has at the present time.

Fee-simple and Letting Value of Agricultural Property—It is quite impossible to purchase good land now at a low figure. Large tracts of inferior quality can doubtless be bought at a price that will pay to improve, but I know of no estates changing hands that have been purchased, and that had any amenities whatever, to pay more than two per cent, and that is probably the experience of the last twenty years. In the large manufacturing districts of Yorkshire land is sold, and is still selling, at very high prices. My opinion is that if big capitalists chose to invest their money in land at the present time they would get a large return for it in the near future for the very simple reason that land does not increase in area, while the wealth of the country is daily increasing, and it is natural that those who have left the land and made their money in towns should wish to return and spend their days on the land from which they sprang.

Agricultural Education.—I confess to having a prejudice against any education other than an elementary one, leaving it to the clever boy or girl to carry on their own education if they have it in them to rise. I have never known a good clever boy who did not rise in the world if he was capable of doing so, having first received his elementary education; but to cram a lot of parrot information into a receptacle which cannot digest it is foolish in the extreme.

No doubt the attractions of town life will draw, and always have drawn, a large percentage from the land, but I very much doubt whether the greater number of those who go there really do good. If, however, it were possible to give a certain amount of practical instruction in rural districts in agricultural and estate work I would cordially approve; but as everyone at the present day wants to be at work and receiving pay at an earlier age than formerly, I do not see exactly how the time is to be found to do much in this direction.

Technical education is a great institution, but the twin R's are the groundwork which must not be skipped, and after that clever boys or girls will, with the many opportunities now open to them, rise to any height; but this does not mean that you can bring on the whole community at the same rate.

In conclusion I should like to say that my experience, which

extends over *all* the northern counties and Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Somersetshire, and Devonshire, leads me to think that the real difficulties that have been met with on landed estates have arisen first of all because the owners have spent from time to time more of their income than they ought to have done—their social position apparently demanding it—led an idle life, and been unable to meet the proper wants of their tenantry. Secondly, that the tenantry and labourers have also spent more than they could afford, and in some districts have been of an inferior class as regards intelligence, capability, and capital. Except in these cases I have seldom come across estates that have not been able to weather the storm and come successfully out of the depression unharmed, and I have known no estate go to the wall unless the landlord has been actually improvident and unable to meet the claims of his family and do justice to his property.

I have found the greatest intelligence and, as a natural consequence, the most thriving tenantry and labourers in the counties of Northumberland and Yorkshire, and these two counties have weathered the storm as well as, if not better than, any others I have come across. I have found very good farmers in Warwickshire, Shropshire, Somersetshire, Herefordshire, and Northamptonshire, and generally in the northern counties, but in none of them have I found the agricultural labourer to be equal in intelligence and physique to the Yorkshire and Northumberland man.

I think the facilities that are granted at the present moment in the way of elementary education are sufficient, and I think there is no occasion to have a technical education for those who wish to follow farming pursuits, the best way in my opinion being by actual practice upon the land. Agricultural labour must necessarily be a dull and slow process, but there has always been in the past a body of men and women who followed the calling from choice, and although of late years this class has drifted into towns in large numbers, I do not think it would do any good to endeavour to create an artificial state of things to try to alter the conditions.

As regards comparative rentals of the present day with those of the past, there is no doubt considerable loss has been sustained, but this loss has to a very great extent been minimised by a judicious outlay on the part of the landlord, and I do not think it is so serious on well-managed properties as to need any special comment. The great loss in this respect has always been on

properties where the landlord was worse off than the tenant. Where the landlord has not been in a position to do anything to meet his tenants or to meet the different style of farming in the way of increased accommodation, the loss of rent may be very great; but I take it this has really nothing to do with what is called agricultural depression, but is merely a state of things that will arise in any other degree of life where the persons interested cannot meet their obligations.

I do not think there is any heroic remedy that would improve the outlook. Personally I am not in the very least a pessimist, especially as regards the situation in Yorkshire; therefore, in my opinion, no special remedy is required

J. W. CLARKE.

H. Rider Haggard, Esq.

It will be observed that the above report is highly optimistic in tone, and I think for this reason should be studied side by side with the other evidence which I collected in the county. There are points in it with which many readers may disagree. Thus, Mr. Clarke's statement that he has 'known no estate go to the wall unless the landlord has been actually improvident and unable to meet the claims of his family and do justice to his property' is one calculated to delight politicians of a certain school and other critics of their class. But is not the assertion altogether too sweeping? I imagine that in every county in England, including Yorkshire, which is, I admit, one of the most prosperous, instances—and in some cases great numbers of instances—can be found where estates have gone to the wall whose owners have not been 'actually improvident.' If Mr. Clarke has any doubt upon the point let him, as I have done, investigate the condition of agricultural affairs in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, and other places, counties to which his experience does not, I think, extend.

Of these and some other districts it might be said more truthfully that a very large number of estates are in fact kept on their feet by the help of extraneous means which their owners chance to possess. But perhaps when Mr. Clarke

wrote this passage he had Yorkshire, and especially the Cleveland district of Yorkshire, chiefly in his mind, where, as he himself remarked, the land is 'manured with iron-stone' If a holder of real property has £10,000 or £20,000 a year derived from coal or other mines, it is not hard for him to be a good landlord who builds premises and cottages, gives large remissions of rent &c, and whose farms are the object of eager competition amongst tenants. However these things may be—and Yorkshire men will best know the facts concerning them—as the main object of this work is to present every side of the agricultural problem and every shade of opinion connected with it, I am very grateful to Mr. Clarke for this clear and able expression of his views, and for the opportunity which he has given me of laying them before the public.

I may, however, call attention to the point that they deal strictly with the land and those connected with it, and do not touch upon the larger, national problems involved in its desertion by the peasantry

In driving with Mr. Scarth Dixon to visit his tenant, Mr. Henry Allison, of Low House Farm, Stanghow, about four miles from Saltburn, we passed through the large mining village of Lingdale. On this very spot, now covered with houses, Mr. Dixon informed us that he shot his first grouse as a boy. Mr. Allison said that the position of farmers in that district depended a good deal on the man. Some of them were doing well and some of them were not, but he did not know many who had advanced themselves during the past ten years. The class, if averaged, was not flourishing. People told him that there was a silver lining to their cloud, but if so he could not see it; it did not matter what they produced, the foreigner undersold them. For farms, however, there was a ready demand, as people who had made money in commerce came in and applied for them. Their condition had depreciated a good deal—30 per cent. he should say—and the stackyards were not nearly so full as they used to be. Their markets, however, were exceptionally

good; thus they received ninepence a gallon for milk all the year round. The rents averaged £1 an acre and 12s. 6d. for moorland. He knew no one who was paying as much as 24s. Mr Allison mentioned a 500-acre farm near by, that he said was not then producing half as much as it used to do, on which the rent had fallen from 32s. to 20s. or 21s. the acre.

Labour generally, he told us, was very bad, 'a very great item,' although not so bad in 1901 as it had been in 1900. In that year farmers were obliged to give 6s. a day and victuals to get labour, and he knew cases in which they had to sell off in order to pay the men and their rent. If an extra man was wanted he could not be hired under 15s. a week and his meat, but personally he had two or three sons of his own who were growing up and able to help him. Ten years before a servant in the house received £15 a year, now he was paid from £20 to £24, and exceptionally well fed, getting fresh meat four times a day with tea, lemon-water, and beer twice a day. When miners came to help them in the afternoon they had 'four o'clocks,' and 2s. apiece.

Mr. Allison farmed 260 acres, or including moorland between 300 and 400. He kept a small but very high quality flock of Leicester sheep, of which one ram took the prize at Bradford that year, and all of his farm that I saw was in good condition. On this place was a curious threshing machine that is still in use—the first, Mr. Dixon told me, put up in this part of Cleveland. It stood in a circular stone house and conveyed the power of the five horses that turned it to a loft overhead. As a child I can remember seeing working at the Manor Farm at Bradenham in Norfolk a somewhat similar apparatus turned by six horses and having, over the centre shaft, a seat for their driver, who revolved unceasingly, like a joint before the fire; but in all my journeyings, with the single exception of this one at Stanghow, I have found nothing so primitive still in use. Everywhere steam has killed out such contrivances.

The prospect from the top of Charles's Hill on this Low

House Farm was singularly fine. To the north-east glittered the German Ocean, its white-capped billows rushing landwards before the gale, and midway between it and me, situated on flat, open lands divided into large, fenced fields, the town of Brotton. To the east a rising plain that runs to the edge of Boulby Cliffs. To the south-east another wide, arable plain marked by woods and Easington Church and bordered with the Moors. To the south Freeborough Hill, the villages of Kilton and Liverton, and beyond them more purple moors. To the west, looking over Throstle Nest Farm, Dinsdale Moor rising to a ridge against the sky, leaving for foreground grass lands and a cornfield set with stooks. Lastly, quite close at hand and looking strangely out of place beneath the pure, blue heaven filled with broken clouds and on that vast and smiling scene of Nature undeliled, an iron mine with tall smoking chimneys surrounded by grey hills of ore and refuse.

The road which we followed from Cleveland to Pickering by Saltburn and Whitby runs over the Yorkshire moorlands, which are devoted to sheep and grouse, more, perhaps, to grouse than sheep. Another industry which may be called agricultural that I noted here is that of apiculture, which is largely practised upon the edges of the Moors, where the bees roam gathering honey from the heather bloom. Mr. F. P. Lightfoot, proprietor of the Pickering Bee Farm, has most kindly given me a great deal of information as to the working of these apiaries. He said that in no district in England is the industry of bee-keeping carried on to so large an extent as in the neighbourhood of Pickering. Men of almost every trade have bees, especially those who are employed by the railway company. Moreover these are looked upon, apart from any profit that can be made out of them, as a source of interest and a means of employing spare time.

There are two bee pastures in the district: clover and lowers from June to the middle of July, and blooming heather, which furnishes the main honey crop, from mid-August to the end of September. In order to gather this

heather honey the majority of bee-keepers move their bees to the Moors, some of them from as far as twenty-four miles away. This must be done at night time, for if they are shut up in the hives and taken long journeys in the heat of the day the bees might be smothered. For the purposes of the information which he has given me, Mr Lightfoot consulted the oldest bee-keeper in the district, Mr George Skaffe, of Middleton, a man whose experience of bees extends over the last sixty-five years.

Mr. Skaffe never used any but skep hives, of which he has had as many as 170, that have brought him in as much as £70 in a single year from the sale of honey. The heaviest hive he ever owned weighed after the heather season 8 st. 12 lbs., which is believed to be a record for one straw skep. His reasons for not abandoning skeps for the bar-frame hives were that the former are easier to move to the Moors, do not take up so much room either on the ground or in the cart during the journey, and require less attention than the latter. Mr. Lightfoot added that it is difficult to estimate the amount of honey gathered in one season, but in 1900 he took an average of twenty-one pound sections of heather honey per hive from ninety-seven hives, irrespective of run honey, which was afterwards put into bottles, or a total of over half a ton. The net profit per hive, at any rate in the case of one large apiarist, seemed to be a little over twelve shillings. He stated that there had certainly been an increase of bee-keepers in the neighbourhood, especially during the past five years. What the profit had been to the new men he could not say, but he thought it probable that in many cases they made a loss, since bee-keeping requires as much knowledge as any other industry, although he declared that the average man seems to think that so long as he has bees he is bound to make money.

Colonel W. Scoby, of Hobground House, Sinnington, our host in this district, showed me Pickering Church, which contains perhaps the finest mediæval frescoes that I have

men. Also there is a tomb with the cross-legged effigy of William de Bruys, a Crusader, and, what are very rare in England, two fine eighteenth-century chandeliers hanging on either side of the altar. Unfortunately I have no space to describe the frescoes, which merit the attention of any visitor to this little town. Their subjects include St. George slaying the Dragon, St. Christopher bearing the Infant Christ across the river, in treatment not unlike to that of the same saint as presented in the church at Horley in Oxfordshire which I have already described, the execution of John the Baptist, Herod's feast, the martyrdom of St. Edmund, scenes from the life of St. Katherine, and others.

In this church of Pickering lie also the bones of William Hall, in his generation one of my few predecessors in the task of investigating the conditions of rural England. His works are well known but not easy to come by, especially *'Rural Economy of England.'* He died at Pickering in 1841 and with more truth than is common in such inscriptions of that period, his tombstone states that 'he was indelible in the study of rural economy.'

At Pickering I saw Mr. Samuel Loy, J.P., one of the principal landowners there, who told me that the rents in the district varied from 10s. to 40s. the acre, the average being about 27s. They had not fallen more than 25 per cent.

since the good times. Land that was on the Redstone commanded a higher rent than land that was on the Limestone; thus farms of his at one end of the town on the Redstone fetched 30s., and at the other on Limestone 23s. the acre.

It was an arable country, and the best soils were those that grew turnips and barley. The breeding and feeding were mostly carried on in the valley. Labour, Mr. Loy said, was dear, as the quarries took away the men, and they were mostly Irish. The young people were going to the towns, and he believed that some were coming back again.

Among the principal farmers of the neighbourhood, in which there were many small-holdings of twenty acres and upwards, I met several men who had raised themselves. Of this Colonel Scoby

and Mr. Loy gave me various specific instances. Thus the former said that he let a twenty-acre farm to a man for £20. Afterwards this man took fifty acres, then 120 acres, and finally a farm for his son of 120 acres at £2 2s. per acre. Again some fourteen years before he had thirty acres to let. They were taken by a farm labourer of thirty-three years of age who had saved £70. After five or six years he increased his holding to sixty-four acres, and some five years ago he went to Malton and took a farm of 120 acres and was then thriving. His ex-foreman had risen in the same fashion, and farmed 400 acres. Moreover in the last two cases the men started after the good times had gone by.

Mr. Loy said that he knew men who farmed in America who declared that they could do better in Yorkshire. Two lads whom he knew went to Nebraska for seven years. They were working very hard, doing everything for themselves, but made little headway. He was of opinion that it was necessary to give some hope of advancement to farm labourers, as if there was such a hope it filled them with an altogether healthier spirit. Mrs. Loy told me that female servants were exceedingly scarce in that district, so scarce indeed that she was obliged to import hers, or some of them, from Norway.

From Pickering we drove through Middleton and Wrelton, where the soil is limestone and redstone with a stiff clay on the lower lands, to Malton and Hobground House, Sinnington, where we were to stay. In this district we saw many narrow, high-hedged fields measuring from forty to fifty yards across, running down to lowland that had been drained of more recent years. These were let at about £2 the acre, and one of them had been sold not long ago for £75 an acre. In 1760 a common existed here which is now called the New Enclosure. The villages do not stand in the valley, but either on the limestone formation or on the chalk above. Climbing a steep slope of Kummeridge clay which once was commonage, we came to the crest of Sinnington Hill.

Here the view bathed in the red lights of sunset was very fine. To the south lay the immense Vale of Pickering, ordered far away by the Wold Hills running from Thirlington on the west to Wold Newton and Filey on the east, a great expanse of fertile wheat land measuring twenty miles in depth by perhaps as many in length. To the north, extending from Helmsley on the west to Seamer on the east, a spreading ridge of lime- and sand-stone, the whole area forming a gigantic basin drained by the Derwent and its tributaries. Nearer at hand, over the brink of the hill looking westward, we saw a fertile and slightly undulating country that extends to Hambleton Hill, eighteen miles away, and to the north-west a well-wooded land, beyond which were the purple Moors that lay between us and Whitby. It was a noble prospect.

Passing down towards Sinnington grass and arable seemed to be about equally balanced. Here the soil was chiefly strong clay with a limestone subsoil. The picturesque village, which has many red-tiled stone houses, is backed by a wooded hill, and on the Green I saw a tall maypole standing, the only one I have found in England. Here lived a number of freeholders, and fruit-growing, especially of plums and potatoes, was much followed. The Seven, which flows close by, falls into the Rye, and the Rye into the Derwent.

Driving on along the Seven through rich meadow lands, many of them of hazel loam which fetched 30s. an acre, we came to Marton, a tidy, stone-built village of about 100 acres, its main street edged by neat grass plots and camore trees, with orchards lying at the backs of the houses. In this parish, we were informed, there are more than twenty-three holders, all of whom have orchards and own their houses and an acre or so of land. Here too lived a man who had been a farm labourer under Colonel Scoby's father, and who now held a mill and a piece of land which he had bought for £260. Colonel Scoby told us that twenty-five years before thirteen acres of land near this village sold for £1,600, that is, the great price of about £123 an acre. Needless to say

it would not now fetch so much. In this district gooseberries, Victoria plums, and Eclingville apples are largely grown.

At Normanby, which we reached next, a third of the parish had gone down to grass within the last thirty years. Here there lived a freeholder of four acres of which two thirds were tillage. Colonel Scoby said that he had known this man to sell £80 worth of fruit off his little property in a year. He said also that from a small farm of thirty-five acres that we passed, which was, I think, his property, several labourers in his own and his father's employ had risen to better things and larger holdings. So at length we came to Hobground House, which actually stands, I believe, in the parish of Great Barugh.

Colonel Scoby told me that he owned about 1,000 acres, of which 200 were in hand. The selling value of land had fallen considerably since 1873, and the rents from 25 to 30 per cent., but generally they had kept on the same tenants who had never been a penny in arrear. His smallest farm was twenty and his largest 140 acres. The farmers there, who, he said, were a shrewd, frugal lot of men, worked hard and held their own. In some cases they got on and even saved money. They were all-round farmers, keeping cows and breeding stock, which they fed out at two and a half years, also a few pigs. All of them produced some sort of horse, useful, heavy cart animals, hackneys or hunters.

Colonel Scoby, who was Chairman of the Board of Guardians for the Pickering Union, which has a population of over 10,000, said, in proof of the prosperity of the district, that there were fewer than forty people in the workhouse, and not more than £10 a week was paid away in poor relief; while in several of the villages there were no paupers at all. The bodily and mental health of the people was also very good; thus out of the 10,000 there were but twelve pauper lunatics, and the rates did not exceed 1s. 4d. in the pound.

He was a great believer in small-holdings, and thought that if a third of each parish were given up to these little farms it would be a good and useful thing. Such holdings were

ping stones to something better, and very valuable as a means of retaining population on the land. Also the sons and tenants went out to work and earn money, while one of them would probably stop to help his father. He believed, however, that it was much better that these little lots of land should be rented rather than owned, and in proof of this he advanced several instances that had come to his own knowledge.

Colonel Scoby added that a good many of the people went away, the women in his opinion being more eager to do so than the men, but so far as farming was concerned the going out of the land to grass and the introduction of labour-saving machines tended to equalise matters in this respect. He thought that it would be an excellent scheme, and tend to keep them on the land, if the lads could be let out to work for two or three of the summer months. Also he was of opinion that there ought to be more co-operation amongst farmers. Of cottages he said there were as many as they needed. None of these had less than four rooms, and to most of them there was a garden attached. It was his experience that allotments fell, not into the hands of labourers, but into those of hucksters and small tradesmen.

The reader will observe that the report on this district is on the whole very cheerful. Whether the place is prosperous because of the presence of so many little men upon the land, or whether the little men are present because it is prosperous I must leave him to judge. This at least is sure, here once more I found a flourishing locality, and in it large farmers and many who may be called small-holders. This combination is, at any rate, suggestive, though doubtless the goodness of the land has much to say in the matter.

Driving from Hobground to Malton *via* Salton, a long roundabout journey, we passed through the village of East Barugh, where the population has dwindled, there being in 1901 fourteen less cottages than it possessed forty years before. Indeed, here or at Salton I saw the sites of many of them overgrown with grass. I observed here that

wherever the level rises ever so little, even a few feet, the land is better and fetches more by 10s. an acre than the colder soil below. At Salton Colonel Scoby took us to visit Mr. John Richardson, of The Manor, who since the year 1870 had farmed 410 acres there, about half of which was pasture. The ricks in Mr. Richardson's stackyard were splendid. I stepped two of them and found that they measured thirty-three yards in length by five in width. A man who was engaged in trimming the stacks with a scythe told me that it had been a grand harvest, and indeed the strength of the straw showed the quality of the crop. There was a waggon also in this yard fitted with a dissel-boom such as is used in South Africa, pulled by chains and swingle-bars and driven by a man who rode the near horse of the pair. The sheep that I saw here were Leicesters crossed with Lincolns.

Mr. Richardson said that he thought farmers were doing 'badly, and very badly'; it was impossible to talk to one of them who did not grumble, and with good reason; but it was not a question of the rents, which averaged from 25s. to 28s. the acre. Still if a farm should be to let there were plenty of people after it, but most of them had no capital at their backs. As with a great deal of experience he could not make farming do, this puzzled him; but he supposed that it was because the applicants were fit for nothing else.

His grass was, he told me, too strong for young stock; were this not so he would breed, as feeding was but a 'poor game' there. In all he fed 115 beasts, his cake bill costing him between £1,200 and £1,500 a year. He bought in some of his stores at two years old at the back-end of the year, and about fifty 'slape fat'—that is, half-fat—animals in April to go out finished in November. The beasts, which were all Irish, cost £13, and in some cases £15 in; but when they went out at, say, £22, after consuming eight pounds of cake a day, there would, he thought, be little left for him.

Labour, he said, was dear and bad, its average cost being £1 a week. Hands could not be found, although 'run-about' men were more plentiful that year. If he were to pay one

in off he did not know how he should replace him, as the young people went away to the towns. The labour used to be 12s. a week; now it was more like 22s. a week, and wagners had risen £5 a head. His hind boarded the men earning £1 a week, and 8s. 6d. a head for their keep. These boys, or foremen, and their wives complained of the waste of food. Thus if a meat pie were not finished, it could not be put upon the table again; still the men's excuse for not eating was often that 'the meat was bad.' The labourers, however, were not a drinking lot, and no doubt they had a good time upon the land. He thought there was going to be a change and that labour would be more plentiful, and this was a general idea among farmers at market.

Mr. Richardson, who said that he was very fond of riding, told us that if it were not for the few horses he had 'I don't know where I should be.' He showed us some of his horses, beautiful animals, worth, I understood, from £200 to £300 apiece. He said that he could not take a right view of the future, chiefly on account of the lowness of prices.

I think it was on this farm that an artesian well was drilled out to us which had been sunk through 1,300 feet of Kimmeridge clay at a cost of £500. It is not for me to criticise a farmer of such great experience; still it did strike me as possible that Mr. Richardson spent too much on his cake bill, although of course the more cake the more of it and the better manure. I believe that his father held this farm before him and that the rent of it used to be 42s. an acre.

In the parish of Brawby, which we visited next, the farms were smaller than in Salton, one of 200 acres being the largest. This, I was informed, is the best land in the district, having a great depth of fine friable soil which has been in cultivation from time immemorial. The fences in this neighbourhood were very well tended. Some of the land has been naturally warped by the river Rye, but where this is not the case it is a poor heavy clay. About

Barton-le-Street the farms are laid out in long, narrow strips, the turnip land being on the hillside, with corn on the heavier bottoms, which showed signs of drought. For some generations, I was informed, this place was a centre of Leicester ram breeding, but the industry has now died out.

About here we entered upon the limestone formation, which continued till we reached Malton. From Barton-le-Street to Appleton-le-Street we drove along a hillside, whence we looked down on to the wooded Vale of Pickering, a huge natural amphitheatre lined and dotted with its olive-green fences, red-tiled cottages, cattle, sheep, or horses grazing in a thousand fields, and bordered to the north by the purple, sunlit moorland. In or near the village of Arncliffe I saw some stacks belonging, I was told, to Mr. W. Fisher, a member of the North Riding county Council, which were built with extraordinary care and neatness. Of all the agricultural arts none has deteriorated of late years more than that of stack building—at any rate in the Eastern Counties. Formerly labourers took a pride in putting up a tidy and well-proportioned rick, now any Tower of Pisa-like erection that, with the help of broken-down ladders and bits of wood, will stand until the thrashing machine comes round, is often considered good enough and a sufficient fulfilment of their contract.

I received an interesting letter dealing with this district from Mr. Frank Langborne, a solicitor of large experience in Malton, from which I extract the following passages :—

I venture to trouble you with a few remarks on the situation of the rural districts in this neighbourhood of the North Riding of Yorkshire, which may be called a good agricultural country for barley and root growing, with light limestone soil on the Wolds, and very fertile, but stronger soil in the Valley of the Rye and Derwent, and the Vale of Mowbray &c.

I may state that the depopulation of the rural districts hereabouts is much felt. The young men and women of the farming class and from the towns and villages 'drift' away to the large towns in the West Riding, Leeds, Bradford, &c., where they earn

and wages and have more amusement and distraction than in the sedentary life of the country places.

The farmers in this district, which I consider a favoured one, owing to the good quality of the land and their own energy, farming, and an inspection of their farms will, I think, prove this opinion. They have a very good breed of sheep—Leicester crossed with the Down sheep (Hampshires &c.)—and grow excellent mutton, not too fat, which sheep find a ready sale in the North Riding at the excellent weekly stock markets in Malton. They 'eat on' the land their turnip crops with sheep, which I take to be the 'sheet-anchor' of the farmer.

I can see no means of checking the depopulation of the rural districts except by attempting to produce some counter-attraction in the villages—better and more healthy houses, additional means of enlightenment of the rural population which might excite their minds to take an interest in and value the scenes of nature around them, and small allotments of land for those wanting them. The interchange of the population in town and country by means of rapid trains and excursions &c. is so great now that the opportunity is afforded for making a choice of habitation and residence. It is to influence that choice in the direction of fostering a permanent rural community in any district is the problem to be solved. Farmers have heretofore made an effort to counteract the exodus by employing their own sons and daughters on their farms, and so being able to farm at a profit. This is shown heretofore by almost all farms being let with a choice of tenants from many applications on any vacancy. The farms here are from about 100 to 300 acres; on the Wolds (sheep and barley farms) from 300 to 800 or 1,000 acres.

I may say, from my own observations, rents have gone down about one-third during the depression in agriculture, and the feeble value of land about one-fourth to one-third.

My kind host in this neighbourhood, Colonel Scoby, also writes —

I also might have mentioned to you that on the Earl of Arundel's estate, which occupies a large portion of Ryedale, that village has a considerable number of cowkeepings, about 100 acres of land, of which one-half to two-thirds are grass; rent, including cottage and buildings, from £8 to £10. There are also many small-holdings—at least 100 farms—at less than £40 rent. The cottages with cowkeepings are much appreciated.

Between Malton and Sledmere the country is of the usual Wold type, but much of the soil appears to be very poor and thin. When I saw them in the autumn of 1901 both roots and grass were much scorched here. About Sledmere were large, larch plantations, and the character of the soil improves, although roots were not a very good crop. Here I saw women gleaning, a somewhat uncommon sight in these days when flour is so cheap that few of the poor think stray ears of corn worth the trouble of collection. Around Wetwang fields were large, fences trim, and trees scarce. The wheat stubbles looked clean and the new seeds flourishing. Where the fences were gappy they were mended with good posts and rails, also I noted a meadow being marled and that the manure was already carted out on to the seeds which had been fed bare—signs, all of them, of good, careful farming. In this neighbourhood were much ash timber and many woods, but little grass. The prospect also on this high-lying plateau was wide. About Garton ploughing was already in progress on the stubbles, and the soil looked very dark and rich.

Mr. T. Reed, of Beeford Grange, Holderness, whom I saw at Driffeld, farmed 120 acres, mostly of clay soil, in four different farms. A quarter of his area was grass, and he grew wheat, oats, and barley, the last being a fair sample only. He was a great breeder of hackney horses, of which he kept a hundred. Both he and Mr. M. Sellers, who farmed 700 acres at Foston-on-the-Wolds, said that their rents, which had dropped 35 per cent., were about £1 an acre. Mr. Reed told me that with the aid of his horses, which were his speciality, he was just making a living; and Mr. Sellers, that he was doing the same, but could not save anything. Both of them had plenty of labour, the wages being 16s. a week, with 25s. a week, food, and ale at harvest. Also there was a good deal of piecework. With the year-men they had considerable difficulty, as the young fellows went away and did not come back, although they thought that these would return. They were a long way from a railroad or town, which made a difference,

but near Hull there was the greatest difficulty in getting labour. Mr. Sellers bred cattle and Improved Leicester sheep, but said that the price of wool and mutton 'beat them.' He estimated that he was losing 10s a head on his sheep in 1901. Mr. Reed said that his turnips had failed and that he would have to sell his lambs.

They declared that 1901 was a wretched year, even the outs being very light and short in the straw. Farms, they informed me, 'got let,' but they did not think that people were 'very greedy' about them. Both of them stated that they had no faith in the future, and Mr. Reed said that if he had his capital out, he would not put it in again, as farming could not continue to be pleasurable when it had ceased to be profitable. He informed me that horse-breeding was a considerable industry in the neighbourhood, as the Wolds are well adapted to the production of hackneys. He had supplied nearly every country with pure-bred hackney stallions, but foreign Governments were not so good a market as they used to be. I do not think that Mr. Sellers kept any horses, but he bred cattle and sheep, the former being fed off in yards and the latter in folds.

Mr. W. Young, who farmed 500 acres at Garton-on-the-Wolds, where his stand-bys were corn and sheep, complained of the bad prices, especially of wool and mutton; and said that they had suffered from two years' drought. His sheep were Lincolns crossed with Leicesters, and the wool that they produced was known as York wool. His barley, he said, was very lean and not a good colour. Labour was plentiful with him.

Mr. Charles Goodlass, of Golden Hill, Skerne, said that Mr. Young lived quite close to a large village, which accounted for the presence of labour; but he, who farmed 600 acres between Holderness and the Wolds, was not sure whether he would have a man left ere long. In his neighbourhood the hands would take piece-work, but skilled labour they could not, or would not, do. Several young men had gone from his village, and that just at a time when they

should be coming on to take the place of the worn-out labour. He would be glad to do everything by piece-work, if that were possible. Half of his farm was wold and half clay, and he wished that he were rid of the strong land. The light soil was much cheaper to work, and £3 an acre was a great deal to pay for the cost of draining that which was heavy. Mr Goodlass said that he had lost between £200 and £300 on his farm in 1900, and although he had some money, if things did not improve he would have to face a crisis. The only remedy that he could suggest was, that the price of produce should be raised, otherwise they would be obliged to go to their landlords. The labour question was one of the worst with which they had to deal. The men were masters of the situation and the farmers were promising more than they ought to pay in order to secure their services.

Mr James Wildon, of Sledmere, said that labour was rather short in his neighbourhood. Men grew scarcer and worse to deal with, and at the same time took higher wages. If found fault with they said, 'Give me my money.' Mr. Wildon, whose farm lay 500 feet above sea level, bred pure Shorthorn cattle and pure Leicester sheep. In 1901 his wheat was below average and his barley an average crop.

Mr. David Holtby, of Rudston, north-east of Driffeld and west of Bridlington, a farmer of light wold land, said he thought that 1901 was the worst year which he had experienced. His turnips were bad both as regards plant and condition, and turnips were vital to him. His district was better off for labour than many, though they could do with more; but two of his men had just thrown him over because he would not give them higher wages. He believed that there was many a man who would not make a penny by the sheep he had fed on his seeds during 1901. On the other hand the black Carr, or peat land, would do well that year.

In addition to those whom I have quoted I saw several other gentlemen at Driffeld, but as there was but one burden to their tale perhaps the sample evidence given above

may suffice to inform the reader of the agricultural conditions in that neighbourhood. I can only say, speaking generally, that the tone of all these gentlemen was far from cheerful. Indeed most of them seemed to be filled with very gloomy apprehensions for the future of farming in that part of the world.

At Eastburn, near to Driffeld, we were the guests of Mr Jordan, the well-known breeder of prize Leicester sheep, a farmer of 1,300 acres of land at the foot of the Wold, which were held by his father before him. At Mr. Jordan's house I had long conversations with Mr Hopper, who farmed 1,100 acres of adjoining light land, and was Chairman of the Driffeld Pure Cattle Company, a very useful co-operative association; with Colonel Staveley, a land owner and farmer; with Mr. H. H. Staveley, his brother, who farmed 1,500 acres, mostly on the Wold; with Mr Jordan himself, and others.

According to these gentlemen the local rents upon the Wold ran from 10s. to 18s., and upon the lower lands from 18s. to 25s. per acre, the fall from the good times averaging about 30 per cent. Two of them at least told us that were it not that they had good homes, where their fathers had lived before them, and considerate landlords they would give up farming, which was becoming a worse business every year. One said that he had actually lost a considerable sum of money, and another that if it had not been for private means at his back he could not have gone on. They thought that were it not for such private means many farmers would be in the Bankruptcy Court who at present were existing, not upon the fruits of their industry, but on money accumulated by themselves or by their fathers in the past when farming paid. Others were just making a living; while the only people who did any good were those who had some speciality, such as the breeding of hackneys. They seemed to see no opening in the clouds, and all of them held that foreign competition was actually on the increase and likely to become still more severe.

There were still applications for farms, but they thought

the class of tenants was very different from what it had been, and that the sons of the men of the old stamp were not going into farming, one of them backing his opinion with the remark that he had two sons, but it would be very much against his will if either of them took up that profession. As an instance of the dreadful fall in prices Mr. Jordan produced his books and showed us how in the year 1872 his wool sold for £1,608, while in 1900 practically the same weight of clip produced but £333. What such a decline as this means to the farmer the reader can easily imagine. They considered 1901 to be one of the worst seasons ever experienced, at any rate for farmers of the lighter land.

Of labour they said that the old men who had been with their fathers and themselves for many years were excellent, but that generally it was bad, and getting ever scarcer, as the young fellows nearly all went away. This was confirmed by Dr. Brand, a medical officer for the Driffield Union, who told me that the young folk were all deserting the parishes, of which the population was sinking, as the demand for healthy countrymen in the towns was eager and continuous. This, in his opinion, must mean a progressive deterioration of the national physique.

Horsemen, ranging from sixteen to about twenty-three years of age, who used to receive a wage of from £14 to £16, with their food and lodging, were now paid from £24 to £26; whereas lads who could not carry a sack of corn, and were therefore not of much use, were taking £16. Indeed young ploughmen often proved unobtainable, and when secured generally gave a great deal of trouble.

The only bright spot they could see in the local farming outlook was that the dry pastures in other counties could not support sheep in 1901, which were consequently cheap to buy, and ought to fat out at a profit on their wold turnips. Many fields, however, were almost bare of roots that season. Colonel Staveley was of opinion that better cottages were wanted and would be some help, and all agreed that it would be well if money could be borrowed

from the Government on easier terms to be used in building such cottages. They thought also that boys in the rural schools should be let out on the land in summer and kept to their books in winter. They seemed to be of opinion moreover—and with this I cordially concur—that there should be some alteration or strengthening of the law with reference to the sale of foreign meat, so as to make it impossible for dishonest butchers to palm off such meat upon customers as English-grown.

One morning of our stay with Mr Jordan we spent in going round his large farm, which has long been famous in the county for the excellence of its cultivation and management. On all except the lightest land the corn crops were good in 1901, and his barley sample, although a little high-coloured, was plump and even. Some of it he had just sold at 28s. a quarter. In the home rickyard the stacks stood thick. They were exceedingly well made, round in shape, with a steep-pitched roof, and, to keep away the damp, were placed upon bottoms of gravel raised eight or ten inches from the level of the ground—a capital plan which I have not noticed elsewhere. Each of these wheat stacks was built to hold as much corn as the steamer could thrash in one day—another good arrangement. We were informed that six waggons, with the proper complement of men and horses, could complete two of these stacks in a day's carting.

Leaving the stackyard, we visited the house of the hind, or foreman, with whom Mr. Jordan contracted to board eight or ten of the horsemen, lads, and young unmarried men at a price of about 8s. per week per man. The place, which was scrupulously clean, was kept by the hind's wife, who, by the way, did not expect our visit. The kitchen, a room of good size, where the men ate and sat, had a large window and fireplace and a floor of well-scrubbed red tiles. The labourers were out at work, but we found the mistress engaged in cooking their dinner, which was to consist of a huge beef pie with vegetables.

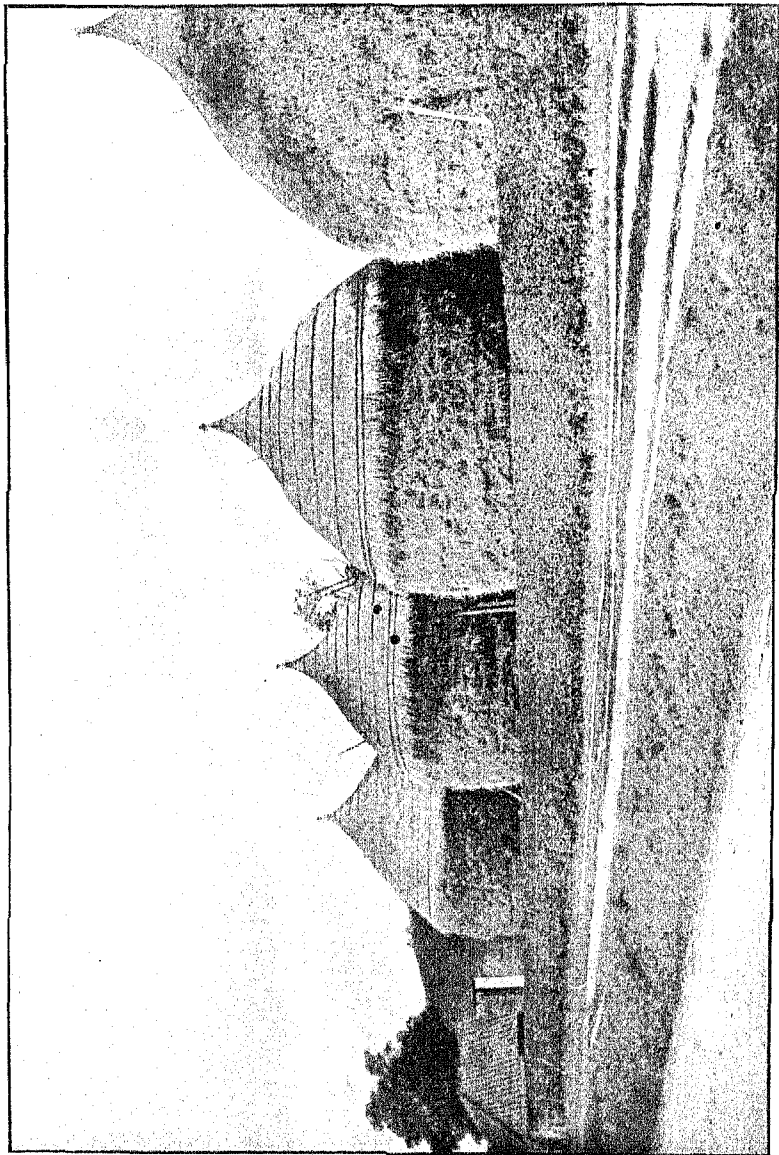
This was the dictary: At 5.45 A.M., cold beef and bacon,

with boiled milk and fruit pie; at midday, beef pie or boiled beef twice a week, and roast beef on Sundays, with potatoes and another vegetable, rice pudding, or fruit pie; at 6.30 p.m., or 4.45 on Sundays, supper, at which the food was the same as at breakfast. It will be seen that these young men ran no fear of starvation; still often I was told in Yorkshire that they make constant complaints, however well they are fed, and that one of their commonest excuses for leaving a situation is that it is a 'bad meat shop.'

Off the kitchen was the private parlour of the family, who, however, ate with the men, for whom the hind carved. Upstairs, approached by a broad ladder, we saw the large sleeping-room, also beautifully neat and clean. It had four beds, two men sleeping in each bed, by which stood boxes with their kits.

Mr. Jordan's cow-house, like all his premises lit by gas manufactured on the place, was large and airy. His great stockyards were covered in with open grooved boards—a most admirable roofing. The peculiarity of this system is that although the boards are laid a quarter of an inch apart, which in dry weather increases to about an inch, thus affording splendid ventilation, no rain to speak of ever comes through them, partly because of the expansion of the wood in wet and partly, I presume, owing to the air pressure from below. Of these covered yards Mr. Jordan spoke with enthusiasm, saying that all stock did splendidly beneath their shelter. Hundreds of pigeons nested in them, and when disturbed flew out with a great rattle of wings, much as they do from caves in the Hebrides. Here all the arrangements were as perfect as they well could be. Thus the calves were kept in pairs, as they do better in this fashion than singly or when herded together.

Leaving the yards, we went to see the Leicester sheep, of which Mr. Jordan kept from 1,200 to 1,400 in all, a flock that is famous throughout England. He had shown at the Royal every year since 1879, winning a prize each time, and at Smithfield for ten years in succession with a like result.



SPECIMEN STACKS IN THE PICKERING VALE

Indeed, the beams and ends of one of his sheds were absolutely papered with prize and commendation cards. The points of advantage claimed for the Leicester sheep are good doing, early maturity, and fine wool, which is set on thicker than in the case of the Wensleydale breed, although the fleeces of the latter command the higher price. The ewes clip eight to nine pounds, which is said to be as much as is produced by a Wensleydale hoggett, and the hoggetts eleven to twelve pounds at a year old.

Mr. Jordan's shepherd had been with him since 1881, succeeding his father, who came in 1866. Two of his foremen also had served on the farm for thirty-six years. The prize sheep pens were littered deep with wheat straw and had their troughs filled with green meat. These pens were provided with runs on the grass outside them, where there was tree shade and plenty of fresh water. Leaving the sheep we walked down to the pastures to see the Short-horn cows, which were all of a good class, and in some cases entered in the herd-book. When dry these cows were sold out to the butcher at about £20 a head. Mr. Jordan spread his cake over the pastures in pieces two or three inches square, instead of throwing it into a feeding trough. By this means the treading by which the grass is damaged and made so unsightly round cake-bins is avoided.

While driving to visit the more distant portions of this great farm, which lies in a solid block, Mr. Jordan took me to see an old labourer, of the name of Duke, who began to work on the place in 1842 and only gave up in 1899. Mr. Duke, who was a fine old fellow, told me that he remembered when much of the light land portion of the farm was a rabbit warren. In the old days he used to earn 10s. a week, on which he kept seven children: he had twelve in all, and often, he said, they had nothing but potatoes to live on from Friday morning to paytime, by which, I suppose, he meant Saturday night. He used to get a 'baulk,' that is, a bit of land, if he could, upon which, I presume, he grew the potatoes. His rent was £3 5s. a year—not much less than

the majority of agricultural labourers pay at present—and in harvest he earned 16s a week and his meat. Now he is, or was, enjoying a comfortable old age on a pension.

The fields on this farm average at least forty acres in size, and are enclosed with square-cut fences which are quite free from timber. On one of fifty-five acres that had been part of the rabbit warren of which old Duke spoke, and is very light land, a good crop of swedes was growing, notwithstanding the drought. The course was: wheat after seeds, barley after wheat, swedes after barley, and oats after swedes. Mangolds were pitted and not touched until the following March or April. White turnips were folded, a third of the crop being taken to the yards. Seeds were all fed off, especially on the light land. Ewes were culled out at a full mouth, when they fetched about 40s.

The self-binders in use were of American make; indeed I found that American machines, and especially ploughs, were in much favour in this district. Mr Jordan grew a good deal of Thousand-headed kail and rape. He said that the rape came earlier, and that the lambs liked it the better of the two.

While staying with Mr. Jordan we drove for many hours over the chalk downs known as the Yorkshire Wolds, almost from Kirkburn to Bishop Wilton. Here the fields are very large, and the farms seem to average from 500 to 1,000 acres, for which the capital required is about £8 the acre. Almost all the land is arable, and the agricultural mainstays are corn and sheep, which are folded upon roots, whereof we saw some splendid fields. In 1901 these Wolds appeared to have been more fortunate than those of Lincolnshire in the matter of rainfall, also their soil has an extraordinary power of resisting drought, with the result that upon the whole the crops were very good. Their aspect is strangely vast, cold, and lonesome; indeed in few parts of England could the population be more thin. The traveller across their expanse meets nobody, although now and again he sees

a solitary farmhouse set in the depths of a territory of its own. Even on the hottest summer day a wind is always moving here. What, then, can it be like in winter, when the plants are deep in snow, and even the roads become hard to travel? The Wold-dweller should have plenty of resources within himself, since for many months of the year those from without must be very limited.

Accounts of the condition of the farmers here varied a good deal. Thus on a single afternoon I saw four men. No. 1, who farmed 1,000 acres, seemed to be doing pretty well, although he had only been in the holding for a few years. In some of these seasons, indeed, he had made a profit of as much as £400; after all, not a great sum, considering that his capital would amount presumably to about £8,000. His conclusion was that a living could be made, but little more.

No. 2, also a large farmer, at, I imagine, a very moderate rent, seemed to be prospering. He was a hard-working man who had advanced himself in the world. Practically he admitted that he flourished, saying that he could not complain of the land, which had done everything for him. Of the labour, however, he did complain.

No. 3, a gentleman who certainly ought to know, himself a large farmer, said that the Wold men were living from hand to mouth. He complained of the bad cottages, the lack of water, and labour difficulties. The population in his district has decreased considerably.

No. 4 told a very melancholy story, saying that there was nothing to be made out of general farming, and that it looked as though the country would be depopulated and the poorer land must go out of cultivation.

These are, perhaps, fair samples of different shades of opinion. I take the fact to be, however, that in 1901 on the whole the Wold farmers were rather more prosperous than those in many other districts, chiefly owing to their having been favoured in the matter of rain or soil moisture. The best or most fortunate men among them succeed, others

kept out a hard existence, and some fail. But might not this be said of agriculturists throughout England, as I found them in the years 1901 and 1902? They were just living, but if things become any worse than they are at present, whether they or many of them will continue to live is another question.

I have collected a great mass of written matter and correspondence concerning husbandry and other rural matters in Yorkshire, but regret to say that lack of space renders it impossible that I should make as much use of it as I had hoped to do. Therefore out of some dozens I shall only quote three communications that seem to me important. The first of these I received from Mr. Edward Wilkin, a clay-land farmer living at Dalton-on-Tees, Darlington, who sets out with some force the protective views which, I imagine, are held by two out of every three farmers. He says:—

I have read your letter to the 'Daily Express,' and I rejoice that you take in the situation so entirely, and if you succeed in your enterprise great ought to be your reward.

I have lived on a clay-land farm since 1851. I was born in 1842, 'when Free Trade was born.' My ancestors on both sides were born on the land, and I have studied the problem you have taken up ever since I began to think. It is impossible under existing conditions for any man to farm a clay-land farm and pay wages, and it is the big money that draws the young man to the towns. I do not say that a man may not take a clay-land farm and make money. There are many that do so, but they do not grow wheat; they are speculators, not farmers, in the true sense of the word.

I have always said that any country that neglects its land is doomed to go back. Look at Spain to-day. Silver ruined Spain, and I am afraid that gold in the long run will ruin our own beloved country.

Now as to Free Trade. Is there such a thing? I say distinctly No, and the very men that clamour most for it are the very men that will have Protection for themselves. I say Protection is a natural law bred in us; it is a thing we have a right to; therefore I say it must come back. Free Trade has never got

further than the experimental stage. England is the only country rich enough to try the experiment. Cobden said, 'In two years all the other countries would follow.'

Free Trade, so called, has ruined clay-land—three-fourths of all English land. In 1851, and until about 1870, two farms joining mine—one, 220 acres, let for £220, now it is £80 a year, the other, 237 acres, let for £273, now it is £150.

When we first came here the village was full of working men and women; now half the houses are empty in winter, and in summer the *swallows* come from Sunderland &c. with their families.

There is a good deal of truth in what Mr. Wilkin says, but if England is to be ruined by Free Trade, ruined I fear it must be, since to cry for protective duties on food-stuffs, as I have said in the course of this chapter and elsewhere, is, in my opinion, to cry for the moon.

The next document was sent to me by Mr. Thomas Kirk, of Owstwick Hall, Burstwick, Hull. Both his letter and the balance sheet which he encloses are very instructive, although it cannot be said that they are likely to encourage landlords who, either from choice or from necessity, are about to take their farms in hand. These documents need no comment from me.

I have read your articles in the 'Yorkshire Post' with great interest, and enclosed I beg to submit a statement of accounts showing the result of an amateur's experience for seventeen years. You will see I have made neither rent, interest on capital, nor anything towards living expenses. I have been very successful in breeding hackneys on a small scale, or the result would have been still more disastrous.

When I purchased the farm, in 1883, it was in very poor condition—fences, gates, buildings, &c., very bad, needing great outlay, both as landlord and tenant (I let it to my son, Lady Day, 1900). Now the farm is in high condition, and the average yield of wheat for several years has been about six quarters per acre.

The labour question is not yet a serious matter in Holderness, but appears likely to become so.

OWSTWICK HALL FARM (153½ ACRES).

84 acres Tillage, 69½ acres Grass, at 25s per acre.

Result of 17 Years' Working by Owner.

RECEIPTS.				PAYMENTS.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Corn	2,904	8	10	Wages	3,898	11	7
Cattle (fat)	12,817	12	1	Livestock	10,910	1	2
Horses ¹	5,572	16	3	Implements	620	0	7
Sheep (fat)	3,951	1	2	Cake	3,114	17	5
Pigs	663	13	5	Corn and Meal ² . .	2,499	11	2
Poultry ³	96	6	2	Hay, Straw, Peat,			
Wool	291	7	9	Moss	373	12	6
Dead Animals . . .	36	3	0	Seed Corn	499	6	2
Rents	124	11	0	Manure	1,321	2	0
Sundries	1,582	5	6	Rates, Taxes, &c.	654	9	1
				Sundries (in-			
				cludes rent of			
				seeds, grass,			
				&c. tradesmen's			
				bills)	4,098	14	5
				Balance	76	19	1
Total	<u>£28,070</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	Total	<u>£28,070</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
Balance	76	19	1	17 years' rent at			
Loss ⁴	4,544	18	5	25s per acre . .	3,261	17	6
				17 years' interest			
				on £2,000 capi-			
				tal at 4%	1,360	0	0
Total	<u>£4,621</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>6</u>	Total	<u>£4,621</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>6</u>

In addition to the loss shown above, as landlord I have expended £1,469 6s. 5d. on buildings, £368 7s. 6d. on draining; total £1,837 13s. 11d.

¹ Chiefly hackneys² Poultry handed over to daughters after a few years.³ Purchased for feeding; in addition to this item corn grown on the farm and consumed, £2,042 14s. 9d⁴ Tenant right and value of following crops &c. should be deducted from the loss, say £500.

The third communication is from Mr. W. H. Clarké, a wholesale provision merchant of Call Lane, Leeds, and deals with a question that affects the whole country, namely, the manufacture and sale of English butter

I have read some of your articles appearing in the 'Yorkshire Post,' and am^o pleased that such publicity is being given the subject, and if it will only shake the British farmer out of his apathy and ignorance the whole country will benefit by it. Personally I have little sympathy with him, I am more disgusted than anything else. When I think of them carrying on their work in the same way their great-grandfathers did, what result but failure can they expect?

I am a wholesale provision merchant, doing a fair trade in Danish, Dutch, Russian, Siberian, and other countries' butter and eggs, but not an ounce of English butter do I sell, or, to put it plainer, can I sell, and why? Simply because eight-tenths of it three days after it is made is not fit to eat. If you will for your own guidance whilst journeying about the country ask each farmer or his wife what kind of butter they make, they will each lay claim to making the finest in their district. So much for ignorance.

I have customers in York who take butter from farmers every week, and they have told me many times that they have had butter brought them on Saturday morning and it has not been fit to eat at night. I have myself tasted it many times, and would prefer to eat margarine. I am a young man, but have had twenty-one years' experience in the trade, and can remember when very little Danish^o butter came to this country and no Friesland at all. The Dutch sent us some, also France, but the largest quantity came, I think, from Ireland and Germany. I am writing from memory. English butter then made big prices for wretched quality. When I think of it now I am thankful I was a youngster in those days, and could eat anything. If I had to eat the same now I believe it would poison me. The Danish butter about that time began to come in increasing quantities. The shopkeepers in this country, who up to that time used to buy enough Irish salted butter in September to last them six months, began to find out that if they wanted to keep their trade they would have to get Danish butter. It gradually increased in favour until last year our imports of *all* butter, eggs, and cheese amounted to £30,000,000. But the Danes have not had it all their own way.

Some years after they commenced shipping to England the Frieslanders sent people over to Denmark to learn the Danes' way of making butter, with the result that at the present time in Friesland alone there are over 100 butter factories, turning out between 4,000 and 5,000 112-lb. casks weekly. I am underestimating, I feel sure. I note that for the week ending April 8, 1901, Finland sent to England 3,815 casks, and the total shipments of all kinds for week ending April 11 was 28,961 casks, and from January to April, 1,260,659 cwt., value £6,694,916. Then our kindred across the seas look it up, and send us thousands of tons each season—America and the Argentine Republic send us butter.

Lastly the people that we, in ignorance, have looked upon as a slow and down-trodden race (I mean the Russians and Siberians) are sending us butter in yearly increasing quantities. I saw in the papers last week that the Russian Government have made arrangements for a line of steamers to sail every Saturday during June, July, and August, and expect to land in London alone 35,000 casks. This is independent of what they ship to the northern ports. The only country that has gone backward (you cannot stand still in this world) is *glorious* England!

When I think of all this it makes my blood boil to think that so much money is sent out of the country, a large portion of which could be kept in, and all through a class of men who *will* not learn, but prefer to go stumbling on in the old way, sit with folded hands, and expect the Government to tax corn &c.—to help them out of their difficulty, instead of them taking the matter in their own hands, combining together, establishing dairies in certain centres, sending their milk there and having it made into butter on the Danish principle. They would get better prices for their produce and would soon be in a position to make farming pay.

If the farmers themselves cannot be induced to make a move—and I have no faith in their doing so—it would pay the Government to send representative men from all districts to Denmark or Holland and let them see for themselves how it is done, and if that will not convince them—statistics and loss of trade seemingly will not—then they deserve to go bankrupt. It is patent to all business men, that if they intend to make their businesses go they must be up to date. This should appeal to the farmers, but it does not find favour with them.

The following figures speak for themselves. Lincolnshire butter sold at Spalding last week (May 1901) at 7d. per pound.

Danish price wholesale	11 <i>d.</i>
Dutch and Friesland	10½–10¾ <i>d.</i>
Siberian	10¾ <i>d.</i>
Russian	10 <i>d.</i>
Finnish	10½ <i>d.</i>

To show how my sympathy goes, I am prepared to take 100 casks every week, as soon as I can be supplied with quality equal to Danish or Friesland

I have not gone into the egg and cheese question, which are equally backward. The labour question would settle itself, with fixed hours and better pay. I shall be glad to know that you are convincing them on this subject. It only wants commencing, to be taken up all over the country.

It will be seen that Mr. Clarke writes very strongly, but I print his letter in full because it comes from a practical man who knows what he is talking of; because also it is high time that this question of co-operation, especially with reference to the making and disposal of butter, should be taken up in earnest. What can be done by private enterprise under favourable circumstances I have shown in the account which I have given in this chapter of the Skelldale Co-operative Factory at Fountains. But the matter is beyond private enterprise and in my opinion ought to receive the attention of Government acting through the Board of Agriculture. To be content with calling farmers hard names is useless. In England, as in other countries, they should be shown how to improve their methods and where there is a prospect of success, I think that co-operative facilities might be provided for them. But as I hope to speak of this matter in my summing up I will not dwell upon it now, further than to add that the real difficulty seems to lie in the fact that the majority of English farms are big. Large farmers will not co-operate; it is against their custom and traditions. Given more little husbandmen and cheaper transport, such as my proposed Agricultural Post would provide, and the result would be many co-operative associations, an enormous output of first-class dairy produce, eggs, fruit and vegetables,

and the keeping of millions of money in the Country that now are spent abroad.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the agricultural conditions prevailing in Yorkshire are too varied for me to enter on a summary of them; indeed unless it were very detailed any such summary would be misleading. They must be judged of by what I have written, which I believe, gives a fair general view of the state of the county in its different parts. One thing will be noted, however, that in the majority of cases there is a great outcry about the labour and the desertion of the villages by their inhabitants. 'They go the towns,' says witness after witness.

Well, I suppose that some of them go to York, after all not a very large city—its population in 1891 was only 67,000. And when they have gone to York, what happens to them? I recommend those who wish to learn to consult a work called 'Poverty: a Study of Town Life' written by Mr. Seebohm Rowntree in 1901 (the first year of my own investigations), on the state of affairs prevailing among the poor in this very city of York. From it I venture to quote a single passage which deserves the deep study of all who have the welfare of England at heart, seeing that what is happening in York is happening, in some cases in an even acuter degree, in very many other cities. Mr. Rowntree writes ('Poverty,' p. 132):—

Allowing for broken time, the average wage for a labourer in York is from 18s. to 21s.; whereas, according to the figures given earlier in this chapter, the minimum expenditure necessary to maintain in a state of physical efficiency a family of two adults and three children is 21s. 8d.¹ or, if there are four children, the sum required would be 26s.

It is thus seen that *the wages paid for unskilled labour in York are insufficient to provide food, shelter, and clothing adequate to maintain a family of moderate size in a state of bare physical*

¹ This estimate is arrived at thus (p. 110):—Food, two adults at 8s., 6s.; three children at 2s. 3d., 6s. 9d.; rent, say 4s.; clothes, two adults at 6d., 1s.; three children at 5d., 1s. 3d.; fuel, 1s. 10d.; all else, five persons at 2d., 10d.: total 21s. 8d.

efficiency. It will be remembered that the above estimates of necessary minimum expenditure are based upon the assumption that the diet is even less generous than that allowed to able-bodied paupers in the York Workhouse, and that *no allowance is made for any expenditure other than that absolutely required for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency.*

And let us clearly understand what 'merely physical efficiency' means. A family living upon the scale allowed for in this estimate must never spend a penny on railway fare or omnibus. They must never go into the country unless they walk. They must never purchase a halfpenny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give any help to a neighbour which costs them money. They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot pay the necessary subscriptions. The children must have no pocket money for dolls, marbles, or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco, and must drink no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or for her children, the character of the family wardrobe, as for the family diet, being governed by the regulation, 'Nothing must be bought but that which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of physical health, and what is bought must be of the plainest and most economical description.' Should a child fall ill, it must be attended by the parish doctor; should it die, it must be buried by the parish. Finally the wage-earner must never be absent from his work for a single day.

If any of these conditions are broken the extra expenditure involved is met, *and can only be met*, by limiting the diet; or, in other words, by sacrificing physical efficiency.

That few York labourers receiving 20s. or 21s. per week submit to these iron conditions in order to maintain physical efficiency is obvious. And even were they to submit, physical efficiency would be unattainable for those who had three or more children dependent upon them. It cannot therefore be too clearly understood, nor too emphatically repeated, *that whenever a worker having three children dependent on him, and receiving not more than 21s 8d per week, indulges in any expenditure beyond that required for the barest physical needs, he can do so only at the cost*

of his own physical efficiency, or of that of some members of his family.

What a picture is this that Mr. Rowntree paints, or, rather, what a photograph does he present to our sight, for here everything is cold, hard fact! And yet within a few miles of the very town whereof he writes⁹ farmer after farmer complained to me of the lack of labour, for which he was willing to pay wages sufficient to keep the labourer and his family in reasonable plenty and comfort in the pure air, and, on the whole, sufficient dwellings of a Yorkshire village.

Surely when such things can happen there must be something wrong with the state of England. Still no British Government seems to think it worth its while even to inquire into the question, much less to attempt a remedy.

SUFFOLK

SUFFOLK, which I visited after leaving Yorkshire, is the most easterly of the English counties and has a total area of about 952,000 acres. Its greatest length is something over fifty and its greatest breadth about forty-eight miles. It includes many varieties of soil, containing, according to Kelly, about 46,000 acres of rich loam, 80,000 of marsh land, 450,000 of heavy loam or wet clay, 150,000 of sand on a subsoil of Crag, which is sometimes rich, and 100,000 of poor sand on chalk. The clay corn lands lie for the most part in the south-west and middle of the county, and the thin, heathy soil along the coast, mingled with breadths of marshland, while between Thetford in Norfolk and Newmarket are poor soils on chalk. The rainfall is very small, being only about twenty-three inches annually. Every sort of farming is carried on, and much corn is grown in the county, which is especially famous for its Blackface sheep.

Our first host in Suffolk was Mr. Robert Simpson, of Horsecroft, Bury St. Edmunds, in the west of the county, a member of the firm of Simpson & Salter, the well-known Suffolk and Norfolk auctioneers and valuers, and my own much-esteemed agent. Driving northwards through flat, well-timbered, light land, we passed Fornham Park, which lies on the Chalk. In this neighbourhood, which is noted for its sporting attractions, the soil is mixed. At Culford, where the land is light with a blue clay subsoil, I saw Mr. Mortimer, agent to the Earl of Cadogan.

Mr. Mortimer told me that good farmers on good land were getting on a little in that neighbourhood, but that the majority

were doing badly. A great deal of the district was practically given up to sport. Thus on the north and west they joined Lord Iveagh's estate, which was a game property where bona-fide agricultural conditions did not prevail. Indeed there existed a general tendency to turn many of the estates in this part of Suffolk to pleasure rather than to agricultural purposes. There were, I understood, over 5,000 acres of land in hand at and about Culford, not because the farms could not be let, but for reasons connected with the shooting. Sheep farming Mr. Mortimer considered the most profitable department of the local industry. Also they kept herds of prize Jerseys, but exhibiting, in his opinion, was not a paying business because of the extra labour which it involved.

With labour he had no difficulty, and he thought that some men were coming back to the land, even from London. The wages were from 12s. to 14s.—a contrast indeed to those that are paid in Yorkshire—and the cottages were rented at 1s. 1d. a week, with a good garden attached. The regular hands, Mr. Mortimer said, did not take kindly to piece-work, which, however, was often put out to casual men from Bury.

We walked over some of the Culford home farm of 1,000 acres, where the splendid model buildings and premises were fitted with water power and every other convenience. In the cowhouse, for instance, water was laid on to the troughs, and the food was carried on tramways. Also there were sliding doors, tile-lined walls, iron fittings, ample space, and perfect ventilation. In the same way the great covered yards had concreted paths, tramways, and every other improvement that can tend to the well-being of cattle. The Jersey cows were worthy of their habitation, as was shown by the winning cards with which the wall plates were decorated. They lay on the best barley straw and were fed with bran, oats, chaff, linseed cake, and a superior meal made from maize, which is called Gerin meal, all their food being cooked in a steaming-pan in cold weather. The pigs were Berkshires,

but the bailiff, Mr Turner, told me that these prize creatures were rather slow breeders. In the park we saw a beautiful flock of South Downs, of which 300 ewes were kept here, or, in all, 1,000 sheep.

A feature of the great gardens at Culford were the yew fences, which the gardener informed me had been clipped twice a year for the last half-century. It is not a style of horticultural art that I particularly admire, but there is no doubt that of their sort these were very perfect and striking.

Leaving the beautiful Tudor Hall of Hengrave on our left, which with its estate of 4,500 acres, I am informed was sold in 1897 for the poor figure of between £80,000 and £90,000, we passed on to West Stow, where there is a church but no village, and about it many Scotch firs and pine trees. Then came water meadows lying along the river Lark, and Flempton with its picturesque cottages. At Lackford, which we reached after driving through some flat and well-wooded lands that were chiefly arable, we called upon the Rev. John Holden, who is the sole land-owner in the parish.

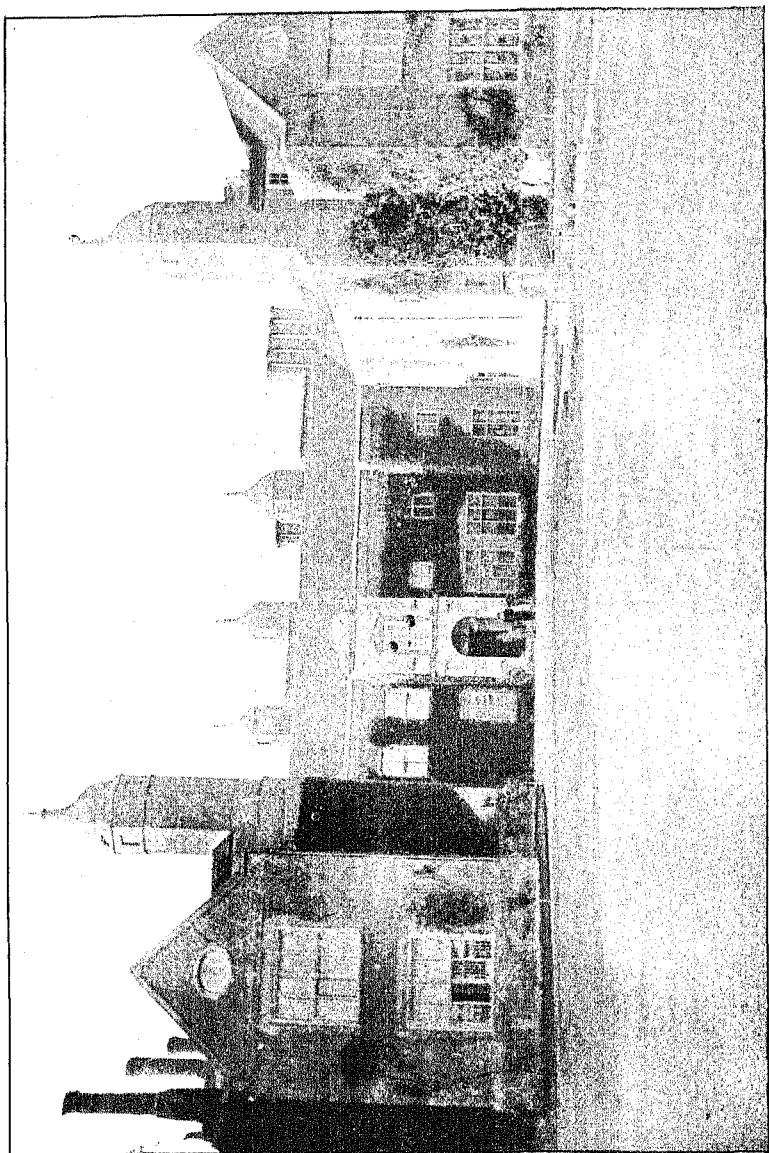
Mr Holden, who farmed 2,000 acres of his property, said that he thought very badly of the prospect on these light lands. Up to five years before, he had made his farms pay, but since then they had not succeeded owing to the fall in prices. His mainstays were sheep and barley, and during the past four or five years sheep had not done so well, and the samples of barley had not been good, none of it being suitable to sell to Bass. Wool, too, had fallen to 7*d.* a pound. The labour had been difficult during the last two years, and generally was not what it used to be. The best young men went away; indeed Mr. Holden told me he had not known 'a young man marry or settle down for eighteen years.' Every boy went, and three young fellows had left him since harvest, as among them there was an ever-growing dislike to agricultural work. He thought that the greater part of the light soil must go out of cultivation. The shooting rents, which were their only hope, alone enabled

him to keep his light land under the plough. Indeed it was necessary to do this, as in places where the land was uncultivated partridges would not stay. He added that during the last fifteen years every property within a radius of six miles had changed hands, for the most part fetching good prices, not on account of their agricultural value, but because that was a splendid game country. Indeed he considered the local agriculture to be dead and that the land was kept in cultivation merely as a home for game, to bring in sporting rents and generally be used for pleasure purposes by its owners or hirers.

In answer to my questions Mr. Holden said that the exodus in those parts was not caused by a lack of cottages, of which there were plenty in the neighbourhood. Thus in Ousden, up to two years before, there had been a demand for houses, but now six were standing empty; and at Icklingham, which used to have a population of 900 people that had now sunk to about 400, it was the same story. He believed also that the comparative ease of the labour market in certain districts was because the farmers had been obliged to discharge hands who must go somewhere. Mr. Holden thought that it would be a good thing if the schools could be closed for a month or two in summer, so as to bring the lads into touch with the land and animals. He was of opinion also that the land ought to be in many more hands, and believed from his experience that where this was the case there was more prosperity. If things were to go on as at present he took a grave view of the results upon England at large, since one day the exodus would be complete, and then the towns could no longer be recruited from the country.

In speaking of his system of farming Mr. Holden told me that this light land was not cropped on a four-course shift, but was worked as cheaply as possible, the common plan being to lay down a field for three years or so, then break it up and take a root crop.

Leaving Mr. Holden we passed on through Cavenham,



A SUFFOLK COUNTRY HOUSE (MELFORD HALL)

an estate of about 2,000 acres with a magnificent mansion upon it, which was, I believe, built by a South African millionaire, but has been sold since his death. Beyond this the soil is a 'blowing sand' and the aspect somewhat dreary, consisting for the most part of young plantations alternating with poor, self-laid grass or fallow and gorse land. A little further on we were met by Mr. Oliver Johnson, of Barrow Hall, the Chairman of the West Suffolk county Council, an owner and noted farmer of his own and hired land in that village, where the soil is mixed with a chalk and clay subsoil.

Mr. Johnson kept forty-five score of ewes and hoggetts and 600 or 700 lambs. His turnips were drilled and set out close to prevent their growing too large, for the most part on layers that had been fed off by sheep. He grew a good deal of sainfoin, which was stacked in very narrow ricks to avoid the trampling of the brittle seed. Also we saw ten acres of cabbages grown for the London market, or failing that for sheep-feed, Sprouting broccoli, and Up-to-date potatoes, which were then being dug. In short Mr. Johnson's husbandry was quite outside the usual Eastern Counties four-course shift and furnished a good example of a man who by energy and resource has succeeded in meeting the times. Practically his large holding was as much market garden as farm, and off it almost every night green stuff, poultry, and eggs were sent to London. One of the results of this system was the employment of a good deal of labour, and as a consequence the demand for cottages in Barrow is eager.

Mr. Johnson's lambs, which we saw on a twenty-acre field of sainfoin, were clean, well-doing Suffolks; indeed all crop and stock upon this farm looked excellent. I think it was he who pointed out by the instance of a farm close at hand, how hardly the system of Suffolk covenants presses upon an incoming tenant, who under them must pay for the number of ploughings that the land is supposed to have received during the last year of its cultivation by the previous holder. On the farm in question these covenants

were said to amount to £5 or £6 the acre, which is more than half the present fee-simple value of that land. It is not wonderful in these circumstances that heavy-soiled Suffolk farms should often prove hard to let.

Mr. Johnson said that he had farmed all his life and held 1,600 acres of land, some light and some heavy. Of this only 130 acres were pasture. He grew a great deal of sainfoin and lucerne, keeping the former down for three years, and fatted many pigs, of which at that time he had from 500 to 600. Of cattle he grazed out 100 on cake and roots. The rents of land in that neighbourhood, he told me, varied from 7s. 6d. to 20s. the acre, or a little more. The 7s. 6d. lands were light, though some heavy soils fetched about the same money—up to 15s. an acre for the very best of them, and those let at 20s. were good farms lying near to towns. The tithe, which was commuted at 8s., now stood at from 5s. down to 3s. 6d. or less.

Farmers, he thought, had been worse off between the eighties and the early nineties, while the 'coming down' process was going on. Those who had survived this were now doing better at times prices. A few indeed did fairly well, but the majority of them were only just making a living. On the whole he did not think that things were worse than they were in 1893, but labour was dearer and the supply generally a little short. He thought that a remedy for this state of affairs would be the provision of better cottage accommodation, and that the 'Housing of the Working Classes Act' ought to be strengthened and amended. He believed that if farmers cultivated lucerne and sainfoin a great deal more it would help them. The value of land had fallen much. Thus he gave me an instance of a farm of 300 acres which was the finest of corn land, that used to let for £600 a year in the seventies. It was sold for £14 14s. an acre, and, as money was lost farming it, was resold at £11 the acre. Now it lay unlet.

As regarded the future he thought that whatever hap-

pened. land which lay within an easy distance of large cities must always be cultivated

In the village of Barrow Mr Johnson took me to see a man called Thomas Parish, who was born in 1804. He was a fine old fellow and quite intelligent. He told me that he very well remembered the battle of Waterloo, for they had a dinner and 'burned old Boney on the Green' He said that in those days the country around was open and unclosed, and that waggons were run to London, as the Suffolk roads were not good enough for coaches to travel them

Driving on by Denham and Chevington, we passed through a heavy land country of somewhat melancholy aspect in this time of the falling leaf, and singularly devoid of inhabitants. It was in this neighbourhood that I saw a farm of 190 acres with a good house and buildings, which could find no tenant at 7s. 6d. an acre. Also I was told of another which had just been let at that price, but the covenants had been allowed to remain—that is, they were carried forward as a debt, which in such cases often never is recovered. I think further that money had been lent to the tenant to enable him to farm the land.

After this we entered Ickworth Park, the seat of the Marquis of Bristol. This park covers 1,200 acres of ground, and is a very beautiful place, remarkable for its fine timber, much of which is so planted that it resembles veritable forest glades, an effect heightened by the deer and shaggy Shetland ponies which wander about at will. The house is, I think, the strangest that ever I saw, but in its way impressive. It has a length of 230 yards and consists of a centre built in the Ionic and Corinthian styles, with a portico and a dome more than a hundred feet in height, while on either side are wings connected with the main building by long curving corridors. This huge and classic mansion was built about 1767 by the fourth Earl of Bristol, who was also Bishop of Derry. I was told that a few years ago the deer in this park were attacked by anthrax, when half of them died.

At Cockfield, which is seven miles south of Bury, I met Mr. H. F. Jennings, who owned Cockfield Hall (which must not be confounded with the other Cockfield Hall in this county, the seat of Sir Ralph Blois, Bart.) and some 500 acres of land which he farmed; Mr. Wright, who owned and farmed land at Preston Manor; Mr. Edgar, of Knight's Hill, Cockfield; Mr. Howard, agent to the Rev. H. Taylor, of Lavenham Hall, and other gentlemen, all of whom, speaking generally, gave but a gloomy account of the state of agriculture in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Jennings, whose buildings were excellent, followed the four-course shift and practised winter grazing. Also he kept cows, of which the milk was sold in the village, and South-down pedigree ewes. He used to breed pure Shorthorns, but gave them up, as the results were unsatisfactory. He said that in this parish, out of about 3,700 acres, 1,700 acres were in the hands of small-holders. These men lived and paid their rent, chiefly by growing corn and working from five in the morning till eight at night, but they had no money to buy stock and their land was full of twitch. The average rent of the heavy land in the neighbourhood was about 10s. the acre; but farms were pointed out to me which used to let from 42s. to 45s. the acre, and now brought in only 5s. 6d. the acre, out of which, of course, the landlord must keep up the buildings and pay the tithe. The wages were 16s. a week, including piece-work &c.

Mr. Wright farmed 650 acres of heavy land, of which he owned 500 acres. He had 100 acres of grass and followed the four-course shift, which he sometimes varied by taking barley after wheat, with beans to follow. If the season were good this paid, but now, owing to the bad labour &c., it was, he said, a doubtful advantage. Both he and Mr. Jennings stated that there was little or no young skilled labour, which generally was short; but the latter mentioned that a man who returned from London had declared that he was better off in the country at 12s. than there at 20s. the week. They gave some lamentable instances of

the fall in the letting and selling values of farms, some of which we saw. Thus one that was mortgaged for, I think, no less than £60 the acre had been sold by the mortgagees to the tenant for £8 the acre. Another of 250 acres at Thorpe Morieux, that let then for 6s. the acre, and on which was land that would fat a bullock, used to bring in more than 40s. the acre. Another that we passed, which formerly commanded 45s. the acre, plus tithe and taxes, was let for 5s. 6d. the acre, the landlord paying tithe.

Another of 120 acres at Bradley Combust, once, I believe, the home of Arthur Young—for aught I know he may have farmed it—which was bought in the good times at £70 the acre, had sold four years before for £7 the acre, and so on.

Mr. Jennings' arm, over which we drove, was beautifully cultivated. The beet, that he dressed with twelve tons of farmyard muck, 1 cwt. of salt, and 2 cwt. of artificial, which were ploughed in with the muck, were particularly fine, one piece giving an average return of something over forty tons to the acre. The swedes, however, seemed a failure in 1901.

For small-holdings in this district there was a good application, but I was told that their tenants had little capital and that their land went back. Cottages, which rented at 1s. 6d. a week, were short, and we saw some that could not be considered good. Thirty shillings the acre seemed to be the average labour-bill, though some paid more, in one instance as much as £900 on a 500-acre farm. All these gentlemen declared that farmers were barely living, and one of them said that 'the better you farmed the less you made.'

About Preston the country is open and slightly undulating. In this village we passed through some land that was cut up into small-holdings on which stood little houses. Also there was other derelict land that had been laid out in parcels for sale, but failed to find purchasers. This heavy soil grows no game, and therefore yields no sporting rents. Although I was told that years ago it used to carry thousands, I saw no sheep in this neighbourhood, it would

seem because the small farmers lacked money to buy them. On a farm belonging to Mr. Eldgar I noted a man using a flail to thrash out beans in a barn—a very unusual sight now-a-days. Here also were some fine Red Polls, which Mr. Jennings told me were of a wonderful milking strain.

Within two miles of Lavenham the country was bleak, lonesome, and undulating. Here we saw some empty cottages, also winter barley, which is grown to a certain extent in this district. In parts of Cockfield the cottages were very bad and had leaky roofs. My companions informed me that, taking the average of these parishes, they were badly farmed and full of misery. Indeed they all declared that 'the industry is in a parlous state—on the verge of ruin, in fact.'

Here I came across a new style of farming practised by Mr. Dyer, who held seventy acres in the parish. He kept thousands of turkeys, geese, ducks, and fowls, some of which I saw being driven along in great droves, the geese and the ducks mixed together. These geese were bought at about 4s. and the turkeys at about 6s. a head in Ireland, delivered, but the ducks and fowls came from Norfolk. Mr. Dyer's practice, I was told, was to hire stubbles from the neighbouring farmers at 6*d.* the acre, on which his stock ran. Also he bought cows and fed meal and milk to the turkeys, and dry meal mixed, I think, with pulped mangold to the other fowls. It was reckoned that the geese ought to double their incoming price before they were sold, while the turkeys all went out before Christmas. As an instance of the onerous nature of our copyhold laws I was informed that some of the land we passed would cost about £10 an acre to enfranchise, that is, as much as, or more than, the present fee-simple value.

Whilst lunching with our kind hosts I was shown an old bell, weighing about eight ounces, which was found in a moat by Mr. Henry Burch and bore on it, clearly cut in Arabic numerals, the date 1133. I mention this because when in my book 'A Farmer's Year' I described a brick

(illustrated on page 323) that bears the date '1393, which I saw taken from an ancient cottage, a correspondence ensued in 'Notes and Queries' wherein, I think, some authorities expressed doubt as to whether Arabic numerals were in use at that time. Here, however, is an instance which seems to show that they were actually in vogue two centuries earlier. This bell, however, may possibly have been imported from the East

At Lavenham, where the soil is heavy, I called upon the Rev. Mr. Taylor, of Lavenham Hall, who had some 800 acres of land in hand. He fattened Welsh, Shorthorn, and Hereford cattle, of the last of which I was shown a lot that had just arrived from Shrewsbury, stores of about two and a quarter years old, which cost him £14 5s. a head delivered. Here also I saw no fewer than 500 tons of mangolds stored in a single barn to save the labour of 'haling' them. The Church of Lavenham, which place used to be a centre of the woollen trade, and still has works for the manufacture of cocoanut-fibre and horschair-seating, is a truly noble building. Indeed I think its buttressed tower of flint work, which is 140 feet high, is one of the finest that I have seen. Much of this splendid fane was built by the Earls of Orford and by Thomas Spring, a clothier, who flourished in Lavenham about the year 1500, whose trade mark appears frequently in the south chapel. His bones lie in the church, and certainly he could have no more glorious monument.

At Great Waldingfield, about three and a half miles north-east from Sudbury, we were taken by our host in that district—Colonel Barnardiston—to call upon Mr. Carlton, who, I think, farms 1,700 acres in seven separate farms. Mr. Carlton said that the farmers in his neighbourhood were just about living—or existing. He farmed 'any course,' but was careful to explain that he was not like certain of the Scotchmen in the Eastern Counties, who took four white straws in succession and then gave up their holdings. Of labour he said he had just about enough, and some of the men were very good, but the young fellows went away.

He paid them well, the wages running from 10s. for old men up to 20s. for engine-drivers and stockmen. Cottages rented at from £3 10s. a year and land from 18s. for accommodation lots down to 8s. Between there and Lavenham the soil was good and strong, but there was not much pasture and he only kept milch-cows on one farm out of his seven.

Mr Carlton said that personally he could not complain as things went, since he worked all his land together and existed on what used to keep seven farmers. He gave it as his opinion that in this district if a farmer wished to live he must either have a very large holding, or a small one and work exceedingly hard with his family. Mr. Carlton did no steam ploughing, as he found that horses were cheaper, but he kept turning up his land all through harvest; also he executed his own repairs and grinding. For cottages they were fairly well off, but many of them were not too good and several stood empty. He gave us some more instances of the fall in the value of Suffolk land. One farm which sold for £35 an acre in 1874 had been offered recently at £5 the acre. Another little holding, bought years ago, I think by himself, for £1,100, was sold again at a profit, and recently re-purchased for £240. Again some land near the church, which had been sold for £60 the acre, was bought by him a few months before for £14 10s. the acre.

At Newton Green the cottages generally seemed to be bad, and we saw some that had fallen into decay, indeed one just past the Green was an awful specimen of all that a house should not be. Mr. Gardner, of Newton Hall, whom I visited here, said he knew that the local farmers were not doing well. There the land was light and they scalded, and having unfortunately missed the showers were suffering from drought. He farmed 600 acres in the parish and, I think, 700 more, as an executor, in Essex. Of grass at Newton he had only twenty acres. He followed a five-course shift, which included two white crops, and sometimes grew peas for the London market. Of sheep he kept 250 ewes and 300 hoggetts, and in 1900 fatted thirty-six bullocks. He

used to grow as many as 160 acres of wheat on that farm, but now he had only 100. His barley was a good sample and sold for 28s. 6d. a quarter. Of labour he had enough, but said that it was not of good quality and getting old, although he did not think the people went away so much as they used to do. Rents about there averaged 15s. an acre. A 300-acre farm close by had sold for £9 the acre, or allowing £600 for the value of the timber, about £6 net, and for a copyhold property that was put up three years before there was no offer. Another farm which thirty years ago fetched £60 the acre, was sold for £7 10s. the acre, with the valuation thrown in. He saw no hope for the future, and Free Trade he defined as Protection—of other nations' corn.

At Assington Sir Brampton Gurdon, M.P., very kindly showed me over Severals Farm and another small farm adjoining, which are rented by the Assington Agricultural Association and belong, I believe, to Sir Brampton himself. This farm is run by a company of labourers and managed by a local committee of working men. The original capital, I think, was advanced by one of Sir Brampton Gurdon's predecessors without interest, and the venture has received other support from philanthropists. The accounts that I have at hand are a little difficult to follow, and in April 1891 there seems to have been a bank overdraft of £153; but I gathered that the enterprise was moderately successful and had met with a considerable measure of local encouragement. The rent charged against the land, which is worked by labourers to whom the ordinary wage is paid, is 10s. the acre, the farm being managed by the local committee. On the whole the land was in good order and well stocked. That this is a useful experiment there can be no doubt; but however it is managed, to make money out of a Suffolk holding of this character is not easy. A good many poultry were kept upon the place, together with stock, and on the adjoining Notts Farm, six cows, of which the milk was sold in the village, and about fifty pigs.

Colonel Barnardiston, who was our host at The Ryes,

Snubury, gave me no cheerful account of agriculture in that locality. He said that the loss upon his rentals since the good times amounted to nearly seventy per cent, but perhaps about sixty per cent. was the general figure. He thought that in the majority of cases farmers did not make both ends meet; that tenants were not so good as they used to be; that the capital employed in farming had dwindled very largely, and that if things went on as they were much of the land must go out of cultivation: 'It is all changing; the whole thing is breaking up'—he said. The lads and lasses were going away and the labour was not very satisfactory.

Colonel Barnardiston could see no remedy short of Protection. He had a farm of 380 acres in hand, but told me that it was not a paying business, and he feared that the 1901 account would come out very badly indeed. People advised him to lay down more grass, but the land was not suited to grass. Also the pastures seemed to be going back. Thus Melford Park used to fat out bullocks but would do so no longer. The selling values of property had sunk much; in his own time he had bought land at £58 the acre which, in 1901, would only fetch about £10 if put upon the market. The average rents were a nominal £1 the acre, or deducting tithe and repairs about 13s.

The Rev Sir William Hyde Parker, Bart., whom I saw at his beautiful Elizabethan house, Melford Hall, where, including the park, he had 600 acres in hand, said that tenants were scarce, except for the best land. For the heavy lands they were not forthcoming. For two years he had advertised two farms and had never yet received a satisfactory application. The rent of one of his farms was 22s. 6d. an acre, at which price the tenant said that he could not go on; but no other was let for more than 15s., and many only fetched 9s. or 10s. His brother and himself had worked hard to make the farms in hand pay, but he had never made 10s. an acre and interest on capital. He thought that an owner farming his own land was

at a great disadvantage. Out of thirteen hands employed he had three men who were young, and one boy, and three more about seventy years of age. His labour-bill on the 600 acres came to £668 in 1900. The best that he could say was that he did not consider the outlook to be so black as it had been four years before.

Sir William Hyde Parker kindly took me to see Mr. Cady, of Ford Hall, near Long Melford, who farmed, I think, about 700 acres there and at Acton. He told me that farmers in that locality had been 'rubbing along.' They managed to live somehow, but did not save money. The rents varied from 6s. to 20s. the acre, but to command the latter figure the land must be very good. Of labour they had been and were short, not so much of hands as in the quality of the work. The men, he said, were quite different from what they used to be, and took no interest in their tasks. Of skilled labourers, such as thatchers, there was an actual scarcity, and nearly all the young fellows went, though a few returned. The wages of daymen were 13s. a week, and of horsemen 15s.; but beyond their harvest money they did not receive many privileges. The average size of the farms in the neighbourhood was from 150 to 300 acres, and the usual course fallow (root or bare), barley, seeds, wheat.

The land was principally arable; thus on that occupation of 200 acres there were only about thirty of pasture, including a piece which he had laid down himself twenty years before. The stock were winter-grazed in yards, and beyond supplying a few cottages with milk and butter, Mr. Cady said that he did no dairying. A Devon man on an adjoining farm, however, had twelve cows and made butter and cream, after the Devonshire fashion, and there were others on the south side of Melford who sent milk to London. At his farm in Acton Mr. Cady kept fifteen score of ewes, from which he bred with Blackface Suffolk rams. He said that he was always making beef and pork. Of beet there he had twenty-five acres, for which he used nothing but farmyard muck; but his crop was good. He told me that all the land

about there wanted draining. This they did with bushes, as the cost of pipes was greater than the state of affairs would warrant.

Things have indeed come to a curious pass in the Eastern Counties when to drain the land with pipe often costs about half its fee-simple value!

Mr Cady told me that the tithe was about 5s. the acre, which would be fifty per cent. or so of the rental of much of the land. This is, however, a burden which falls entirely on the shoulders of the owner.

Driving on, still in the company of Colonel Barnardiston, we came first to Glemsford, where the land seemed particularly good. All about here to the west of Melford the country is undulating and slightly timbered, a wide, open farming district. Passing Blacklands Hall we came to the large parish of Cavendish, which gave its name to the family of the Dukes of Devonshire, where the soil is clay and loam. Here many of the cottages struck me as bad, being built of red brick and slate, but low and small in size. Indeed those that were of the old-fashioned plaster and stud work with thatched roofs looked more comfortable. The church tower, like that which I saw at Long Melford, is a great feature in the landscape. Beyond Cavendish the road runs along the valley of the Stour, the boundary between Suffolk and Essex, until Clare is reached. Here we passed the vast earthworks of the ancient castle which stands not far from the house of Mr. Ray, where we saw a number of the leading farmers of that neighbourhood.

Among these was Mr. Andrew Boa, agent to the Hon W. F. D. Smith, M.P., who owns an estate of over 7,000 acres of land in these parts, purchased some twenty-four years ago. Then, Mr. Boa said, the farms were all well let, but the years of 1878 and 1879 crippled the tenants. He entered on the agency in 1881, after which 4,000 acres of land were taken in hand, but of this area 1,000 acres had since been let. The estate, which is all heavy land, runs a distance of seven miles from Thurlow to Hundon and Poshingford, which is a high ridge lying 400 feet above sea

level Mr. Boa said that the farms in hand paid their way, that is, they yielded an average rent, but no interest on the capital invested. They did not attempt to farm them on a lavish scale, but in accordance with the system of the county, and he considered that it was their breeding stock and sheep which kept them going. Of labour they had always had sufficient, but there were no spare hands. In 1900 they sold a ton of turkeys off one farm, an extra which helped the accounts. The custom was for the stockmen and their families to look after the poultry, receiving in return a percentage on the value of the dairy and fowl produce. A few of the farmers were laying down land to grass to be used as a sheep 'stray,' but he thought that in this county grass lands were badly farmed. Sainfoin was usually drilled with oats, also lucerne for green meat. Rents ran from 20s. the acre, which was exceptional, down to 8s.; but the lowest on Mr. Smith's property were 13s. The four-course shift was generally followed.

Mr. Ray, who held 1,000 acres in three farms, told me that the feeling amongst agriculturists was not very hopeful owing to the lowness of prices, and that he feared their capital was wasting. They had sufficient labour 'of a sort,' as much as they could afford to pay. Winter barley was grown rather extensively, with many more oats than used to be the case, as wheat no longer paid to produce. He pointed out that grain was shipped from New York to London at 1s. 4d. the bushel, whereas from Clare to London, which was only fifty-six miles distant, the cost of its carriage amounted from 9d. to 1s.¹ Both he and Mr. Boa agreed that under present conditions the only people who could live out of Suffolk agriculture were the big man and the small man, and that the farmer who had a holding of intermediate size must go under.

Mr. H. O. Stockburn, who, I understood, farmed 400 acres of his own land at Clare, said that labour was his greatest difficulty. For the eight years that he had lived

¹ The accuracy of these figures has since been disputed by the Great Eastern Railway. H. R. H. 1908.

there he had been trying to get on better terms with his men, but was as far as ever from this consummation. The feeling between employers and employed was bad, and to get a job done he must stand over his labourers. Either he or Mr Slater said that every rise in wages meant less work, as nothing but actual poverty would drive a man to hard toil. Mr. Stockburn went so far as to declare that if he could house them he would bring down men from the Shires, even if he had to pay them £1 a week.

Mr. John Slater, of Cordell Hall, Stansfield, where he held 600 acres, said that he had forty-five years' experience, and that as he farmed where his father farmed before him, and their labourers were bred upon the place, a better feeling existed between master and man than that described by Mr. Stockburn. He told me that the small farmers got their bread and cheese if industrious, but that he pitied people who held less than 500 acres. The present depression he attributed to lowness of prices and to the competition of what he might call 'illegitimate agriculture,' that is, the robbing of virgin soils across the seas until they became worthless, and were abandoned for others. The remedies he suggested were a 5s. duty upon foreign flour and the compelling of English railway companies to carry home-grown at the same rates as foreign grain. He was sorry to say that the substantial help given by the Agricultural Rates Act was being neutralised by the enormous increase in the local district, road, and sanitary rates, the latter of which were mainly incurred to pay for the sinking of deep wells into the chalk that produced hard water which was unfit for any domestic purpose. These, he thought, should be abandoned for open reservoirs, which yielded water that was suitable for drinking and other purposes.

The Rev. R. Abbay, the Rector of Earl Soham, in a paper on local taxation, read before the Framlingham Farmers' Club in 1902, points out that the expenditure on the roads, which is very inadequately assisted by certain receipts from the Assigned Revenues and Agricultural Rates Grant, is one

that is being felt far more heavily than any other in Suffolk. He says :—

It has never been so great as it is at present, and, strange to say, the roads have never in recent times been in so unsatisfactory a state as they were in 1901. The primary cause of this I believe is the doing away with the system of picking stones in the fields, due to the advance of education.

The badness of the Suffolk roads has been notorious since the time of Arthur Young; indeed after travelling throughout most of England I think that some in the neighbourhood of Lowestoft in this respect bear away the palm from any in the Country. Yet, as Mr Abbay says, their cost is extraordinarily high, although, in certain instances at least, little enough is done for the money. Thus, to take an example within my own knowledge—typical enough I daresay—at Kessingland a road runs from the Lowestoft highway down to some houses on the cliff, one of which is my property.

This road is not only atrocious, but in wet or very dry times, absolutely unsafe. I have myself been thrown off a bicycle in attempting to ride down it, and have seen the same accident happen to others. Moreover there is a most dangerous corner, made more so by a telegraph pole sunk in the narrow roadway which in one place is only about nine feet wide, with a fall into a ditch upon one side and over an archway head on the other.¹ Yet neither repeated appeals nor remonstrances can induce the local district Council to have it widened and made safe, or even put into good repair.

Indeed matters have come to such a pass that, after much unavailing correspondence, I have been obliged to give formal notice through a solicitor that the Council will be held responsible for any accident or damage befalling members of my household owing to the condition of the road. Meanwhile the highway rates increase by leaps and bounds, and those of

¹ Since the above was written I see that at length a rail has been put on this archway head; also, I read in the paper that the Council again refuse to widen the road in question. Let me at least hope that they may be moved to mend it as it ought to be mended,

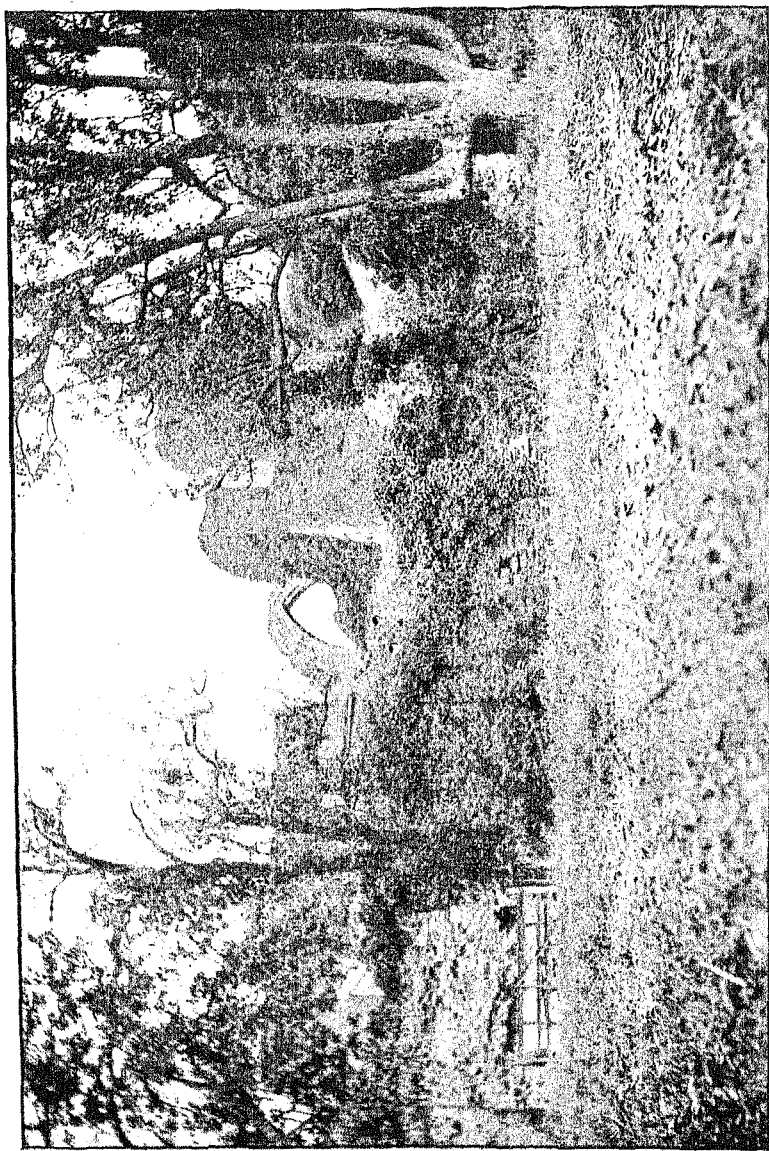
the inhabitants of Kessingland who are treated thus are, needless to say, not exempted from them.

Mr. Slater said that another cause of the depression was the increased cost of labour, which was made much worse by a concurrent decrease in its efficiency. In his opinion arable land can only be made to pay by enlarging the fields, adding farm to farm, and doing nothing by hand labour that can be done with horses, and nothing with horses that could be done better by steam. Small-holdings could only be successful on the best land, which must not be far from large towns where a ready market can be found for vegetables. Farm labourers would not hire or purchase poor heavy or poor light land, the bulk of which lay remote from villages. What then could be done with these large areas of inferior land? To lay them down to grass was to impoverish them and all connected with them. On the other hand experience proved that for many years consecutively, and without the help of manure, even poor clay soils would produce large crops of cinquefoil, which is very nutritious forage, while at the same time enriching the land by gathering nitrogen from the air and storing it for the use of future corn crops.

Mr. Ambrose, of Cavendish, agent to Lord Howe, thought that things were as bad as they well could be, and could see no hope for the future of Suffolk agriculture.

Mr. Goodchild, who dealt in cattle and held 600 acres at Clare, said that a man could earn nothing out of farming. He declared indeed that if he desired so to do, he could hire 10,000 acres within a radius of ten miles at an average rent of 7s. the acre. The population, he said, was shrinking. Thus he took the census at Hundon and found that it had then 400 less inhabitants than lived there forty years before.

I saw some auctioneers and land agents in this part of Suffolk, two of them men of great and long experience. One of these said he thought that the only people who would make a living out of farming in future were the big man and the small man who worked himself. The average farmer had



struggled for years and the season of 1901 was disastrous to him. It seemed strange that under these circumstances there should be a demand for farms, but very often the applicant was either a tradesman or some farmer who wished to get away from an outlying holding to one nearer a town. Unless some change occurred it looked as though all the worst land must go out of cultivation. Farmers were undoubtedly losing capital in many cases, while labour cost more and was worth less than in the past. A large proportion of the light land in Suffolk was only farmed for the game, the game rent being its chief value. This, he said, was decidedly a most unwholesome state of affairs, especially as these hirers of game estates only occupy them for about three months of the year and take no interest in county matters. Without doubt there was a shortage of capital, and credit had often to be given to purchasers of stock.

Yet, although the prices of produce were so much lower, to enter on a farm cost as much as ever. The local farming was, he thought, as good as it had ever been. He considered that the cultivation of larch ought to be encouraged on all the lighter soils, but the heavy lands 'beat him.' He knew of nothing that would make them pay, unless it were the growing of sainfoin. The objection on the part of labourers to extra hours and Sunday work made the production of milk almost impossible, especially as to catch the market men must begin their day at 4.30 A.M. The average wage prevailing in most of the county he put at from 13s. to 14s., with from £7 10s. to £8 10s. at harvest.

A second gentleman gave me some instances of the fall in land values. Thus one farm of, I think, 245 acres, with five cottages on it, sold in 1873 for £13,000. In 1893 it was put up, but there was no bid, and afterwards it sold for £1,850. My informant added that this farm, which had been mortgaged for £10,000, was one of the best he knew; indeed there existed no better land in England. He said, however, that this case was exceptional. Another farm of 250 acres, tithe-free and land tax redeemed, of fair, heavy soil, sold for

£1,000. Labour, he told me, was a little short and a proportion of the people drifted away. The minimum wage was 13s., but some men earned up to 18s. or more, out of which they paid 1s a week for a cottage. The heavy land farmers had, he thought, earned a living during the past four or five years, but those on the light land had been hard hit, especially round Bury, where the crops were very thin. About Newmarket shootings fetched great rents. Thus 450 acres of partridge land which he knew of were bringing in £100 a year for this purpose.

Travelling from Bungay to Darsham the railroad runs as far as Beccles along the Waveney Valley, where some of the land is as good as any in Suffolk. From Beccles to Halesworth lies a stretch of poor and heavy soil, as bad perhaps as can be found in the county. It is thin-skinned and under-drained, and, as may be seen by the bushes that grow upon the neglected pastures, many of which have evidently tumbled down to grass, now-a-days at any rate, is almost worthless for farming purposes.

Our host in East Suffolk at Theberton, which lies three or four miles from the sea and is not far from Saxmundham, was Mr. Robert Flick, of the well-known firm of Messrs Flick of that town, a widely respected gentleman of great experience in all matters connected with Eastern Counties land. Driving from Darsham station to Theberton we passed through Middleton, where the soil is mixed, with a clay and sand subsoil. Here there is a good green called Middleton Moor. This district is undulating with rather steep short hills, and somewhat sparsely timbered. Except in low-lying spots I saw but little pasture, but from Theberton Hall in the Minsmere Level, which was drained at great cost some time ago, marshes run down to the sea over three miles away.

As we drove, Mr. Flick's coachman, a very intelligent man, pointed out a farm which he said had been worth £16,000 and was now worth £4,000, and another of 200 acres held by a man who began with nothing at all.

In the neighbourhood of Theberton are many small-holders, some of whom Mr. Flick took me to see. The first was Mr. Brighton, of Leiston, who farmed eighty-six acres. He told me that he came here twenty years before, and had saved a little as he went along. He could live, but he did not put by much money, although, as he said, 'if I see a shilling I am after it, and if I get hold of a sovereign I stick to it.' Mr. Brighton declared that he went into anything out of which he could make money; thus, once he had done the drilling for the whole parish. That of 1901, however, was the worst year he had ever known, as the crops were so short. Mr. Brighton kept cows but no sheep, and followed a four-course shift. He had no trouble with labour himself, but said that the villagers went off fishing. Also he complained that there was too much game upon his land. The wages he paid were 13s. a week and £8 5s. for harvest. I gathered that his rent was about 12s. an acre.

Mr. Newstead, another small-holder, said that he began with three acres. He had got along by very hard work, of which he complained somewhat, but would not, he said, be able to take another twenty acres. He grew what he liked and sometimes sold a little straw. Also he kept two cows which his wife milked, but told me that he had not enough pasture.

Passing through Theberton, a pretty village with a round-towered, thatched church, where some of the pink-coloured cottages were comfortable and others seemed very bad, we came to the farm of a third small-holder, Mr. King, who held twelve or fifteen acres under Mr. Flick. Mr. King said that he began life as a labourer at 9s. a week thirty-five years before, and had worked wonderfully hard. He made butter and fed his skim-milk to pigs, of which he kept a good many. He admitted that he could make a living, but when Mr. Flick suggested to him that he should take a larger farm he replied that he was master of this place, but where would he be if he had one which was master of him?

Driving on to Middleton, we saw a farm of ninety acres

which Mr. Flick said was held by a man who had been a bailiff, and began with nothing. Here we saw Mr. Chambers, who was tending his ewes that were penned upon mustard, pedigree Black-face sheep, which Mr. Flick declared to be the finest flock he knew. Mr. Chambers, who farmed 180 acres at a rent, I think, of 12s. 6d. an acre, said he allowed no one else to touch his sheep, and that a man who attends to his business, and is always with his labourers, 'could get twice as much out of them as the man who was 'here, there, and everywhere.' I gathered that Mr. Chambers did well, as he deserved to do. Mr. Flick said that this farm had sold at £10 the acre, although the land upon which we saw the sheep was worth £1 an acre to rent. He added, what is very true, that the farmer who wished to succeed must be a good farmer, and have a wife who was a real helpmate; he must not 'ape the gentleman.'

At Kelsale, on a farm belonging to Mr. Flick, we saw his bailiff, Philip Woodard, a fine old man who said that he had been sixty years in farming. As a boy he had started on sixpence a week, and as a young man was paid tenpence a coomb for thrashing with a flail, with which instrument he knocked out something like three and a half coomb a day. He said that there was not so much grumbling among labourers then as there is now, although they were paid only £4 10s. for a harvest which now brought them in £8 5s. Neither did the men work as they used to do, although they took a great deal more money and ought to be much better off.

He thought that a farmer could earn a living on that land if he worked hard, and mentioned several by name of whom he said, 'They all fairly live, but if they get much money I can't say. Some,' he added, were, however, 'getting on a bit queer.'

After looking at some excellent cottages built by Mr. Flick, we called on Mr. Samuel Thompson, of East Green, Kelsale, a farmer of eighty acres who was reported to have done well at a rent of about £100 a year. Mr. Thompson

told us that he had nothing to say against the land, which was good. Of labour he had plenty, but it was not of the same quality as it used to be, and his three men cost him the price of three coomb of wheat a week. He said, 'I reckon I am an exception; I have wrought all night before now,' adding, 'I never can hear anything at these lectures that does me any good.' Evidently our modern technical education does not appeal to Mr. Thompson. He remarked that to succeed at farming 'you must be into something of all kinds,' and that every farm must be differently treated, which is undoubtedly true. Mr. Thompson kept cows and a good many fowls.

Another small-holding of about twenty acres which we saw in this neighbourhood was held by a man who, Mr. Flick told us, had been a labourer ten years before and was now in a position to take a farm of forty acres. These men are samples of the small-holders who live in the neighbourhood of Theberton. None of them were rich or extraordinarily successful; but it will be observed that on their own showing they all of them made a decent living; also that the majority had risen from very humble beginnings.

Yet in various parts of Suffolk I was told it was almost impossible that small-holders could exist and that they ought to be discouraged in every way. Of course the truth is that their prosperity depends upon the land they farm, although I believe myself that even in the present unpromising times, there are men who, in the absence of any exceptional ill-luck, will contrive to live upon almost any sort of land, and occasionally even to advance their fortunes. Certainly the little farmers in this neighbourhood cannot be said to possess any remarkable advantages either as regards markets, or in the matter of the production of a speciality only suited to their district. They are general farmers and live out of the produce which is common to the county.

On one day of our stay with him, Mr. Flick took us to see Mr. Geater, of Leiston Abbey Farm, which is the property of Lord Huntingfield. On the farm itself stand

the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey. Indeed the refectory of this once beautiful fane, which was founded in 1183, is now a pig-sty, the aisle a barn, and the chancel a stable, while the piscina by the altar was filled with the filth of horses. Perhaps it is a mere prejudice, but for my part I do not like to see buildings turned to uses so base and desecrating that have been sacred to many generations of our race, beneath the floor of which moreover doubtless lie the bones of those whose loving care wrought them into things of beauty.

As might be expected of land that was farmed by the old monks, the soil here is good and situated on a fertile plain which runs down to the sea about two miles away. Mr. Geater said that for the past five years, during which he had occupied this farm of 234 acres, the seasons had been perfection, and these with the barley which they enabled him to grow, had kept him afloat. Of wheat he had then only fourteen acres; it used to be forty. His barley yielded from five to seven coomb the acre, eight coomb being a really good crop. He had laid down twenty-two acres of pasture, but there was some poison on the farm which made it impossible for him to keep sheep. It was a matter of tradition that sheep had always died there and this was his own experience. In the previous season his had perished even on mustard, to the number sometimes, of three a night.

Once or twice in the course of my travels I have come across farms which were said to be poisonous to sheep, but whether this is so or they are but temporarily infected with some germ or parasite, is more than I can determine. In Africa I have known stretches of veld which are undoubtedly fatal to animals, but—outside of the tsetse-fly belt—invariably this has been owing to the presence of some deadly herb which grows among the grasses at certain seasons of the year. Once when farming in that country I lost my entire stock of oxen through their eating of this herb, which locally is known as 'tulip.'

Mr. Geater thought that labour was one of the most difficult questions that a farmer had to face. In this

respect he was then better off, but he had been so short that he was obliged to clean the boots himself. Farming in his opinion was now-a-days a business in which if a man wished to live he must do double the work of a labourer. He could not see any good prospect for the future, and told Mr. Flick in my hearing that he believed that before long he would hold many more auctions.

Driving on past the great agricultural implement factory of Messrs Garrett & Sons, Mr Flick pointed out to us a farm which used to let at £1 an acre, but had then fallen to 5s the acre, and another of 400 acres whereof the rent had sunk from £400 to £100 a year. I observed throughout this district that mustard was largely grown as a catch crop.

The next farmer whom we visited was Mr. Tyrrell, who in addition to an off farm of 200 acres, held here nearly 300 acres under Lord Huntingfield at a rent, I gathered, of about 15s. the acre. Unfortunately Mr. Tyrrell was out, but I had an interesting conversation with his wife and their young son. The land was a stiff mixed soil of good quality to which dry seasons were favourable, and Mrs. Tyrrell said that they could not complain of the corn crop, some of their barley having yielded as much as twelve coomb an acre and sold for 16s. 6d. a coomb. Their farming was of an all-round character, including a flock of 160 ewes, a herd of fourteen cows—of which the milk, that was sold in Leiston, and other produce came to a value of £290 in 1900—bullocks that were fattened, pigs, and the cultivation of cereals. One fifth of the land was in pasture, and in 1901 they were much pinched for sheep feed. In 1900 they had difficulty in getting labour, but in 1901 matters were improved in this respect; still, Mrs. Tyrrell added, 'labour is a trouble.' She told me also that farmers were complaining a good deal in that neighbourhood. This holding struck me as very well farmed and had a prosperous air.

Beyond Mr. Tyrrell's we saw a good deal of land that was almost derelict, having tumbled down to grass in past years. One farm of 102 acres, of which the soil can best be

described by saying in the local phrase that 'the bottom is too near the top,' seemed to be quite uncared for and without buildings. Yet Mr. Flick informed me that these fields of barren-looking pasture were let by auction for from 10s. to 12s. the acre, to tenants who used them for running stock on in the summer. That is to say, they fetched as much as a great deal of sound arable in the neighbourhood and indeed throughout Norfolk and Suffolk, whereon the landlord is obliged to keep up houses and expensive buildings. Of course the reason was that they were grass, and for grass, however poor, there is always some demand.

The lesson is as obvious as it is sad, and its moral seems to be that good cultivation and the growth of corn scarcely pay over large areas of East Anglia, and that the landlord would often actually save money by allowing the heavy lands to go down to any grass which they will carry, and the light lands to be given up to game, growing on these only sufficient corn to keep the partridges together. Should things come to this pass it would mean of course that many of the buildings must fall into disrepair, and a still greater depopulation of the villages, since but little labour would be required. Such a consummation could be nothing short of disastrous; yet sometimes I wonder for how long the owners of such land will be able to keep it in cultivation at what in many instances is an actual loss, at any rate so far as the poorer soils are concerned. On these, year by year the expenses grow rather than diminish, since tenants are ever demanding new buildings and other costly improvements, while taxes rise and the returns remain stationary, or decrease.

For how long then in the absence of some change for the better, will the back of the average landowner be able to bear this burden? Critics may and do say: If he can make nothing of his land by letting it, why does he not farm it himself? But the fact is that in the vast majority of cases to do so means a yet larger loss of money, even if he can find the necessary capital, which often amounts to the fee-simple value of the land. The gentleman who farms is—

and must remain—at a great disadvantage, since he is overreached in many ways by the dealer, who sells his stock but with whom he cannot drink and haggle, by the labourer who too often ceases to work the moment his back is turned, and sometimes by the steward whom he employs to watch the labourer. In East Anglia, at any rate in nine cases out of ten, a living can only be made from farming at the prevailing prices, by the professional farmer who is born to the trade, understands its customs, and is blessed with a wife who will work with her own hands. Even then that living is a poor one and leaves but a small surplus to be paid as rent to the owner of the soil, out of which he must meet the heavy and often increasing charges that are unjustly heaped upon it, in the shape of death duties, taxes, repairs, and rates for the maintenance of roads which are used by the whole community, to say nothing of the dreadful burden of the tithe.

I said that the landlord or any person who is not born thereto and does not devote to it his entire time and attention can scarcely make farming pay, and I will give an instance of my meaning. Our host, Mr. Flick, who I suppose understands agriculture as well as any man in Suffolk, has great experience in everything connected with the land, and, as an auctioneer, possesses other advantages over the ordinary person, told me that he farmed 1,000 acres of which some was his own property and some was hired. What were the results? On his tenant's capital—that is, the capital which he employed in the hired land—he made an interest of four per cent. On one 400-acre farm he paid the rent and a little over. On the home farm he lost money, its only profit to him being that he occupied his house rent free.

Taking it all round and balancing losses against profit, it seems therefore that he earned about four per cent. on the capital invested in farming and no more, or so I understood him, which is about as much as the money, if carefully invested, would produce without labour or anxiety to himself. Therefore I presume that if he had no other business or resources Mr. Flick would find it difficult to support his

house and fanfly, even in the most moderate fashion, out of the proceeds of his farms. If this is so in the case of a gentleman so able and experienced, what, I may ask, happens to others with fewer advantages in these respects, and especially to those among them who have been obliged to borrow in order to stock their holdings?

I had some long and interesting talks with Mr. Flick on the various branches of this inquiry, and my first intention was to give my own impressions of them. Before I left his house, however, Mr. Flick read to me some notes which he had very kindly prepared on these matters. These, with some slight compression and a few verbal alterations, I print, both because of their intrinsic interest and value, and for the old lawyer's reason that when a written document exists verbal statements on the same subject ought not to be entertained, lest the recorded views of the writer should suffer change.

Notes on the position of the Land and Agriculture by Mr. Flick.

I will treat of the three orders mainly concerned in the cultivation of the soil

1. *The Labourers.*—The labourers 'back to the land.' That is the 'cry' of the Press and the fancy of the people. Well, I do not think they will ever come *back*; certainly no legislation will ever bring them. Some of the rising generation may be induced to stay, but it will be by training them to the use of machinery and paying them higher wages. It should be remembered the most intelligent men have gone: these will never come back, but the rising intelligence may stay as competition in the town increases, and the young men of the country are better paid. It should be remembered too that as many men are not required as formerly to till the land. During the last three years by the use of a self-binder I have had five men only to gather in the harvest on this farm instead of seven. Other labour-saving machinery will be introduced. Uniformity of wages should also be discontinued, and the best men must be best paid: this will help them to become farmers themselves better than any other means. Our educational system, as you very rightly say, is a city system, or rather I should say a town system. What do our country lads want with algebra and trigonometry?

Nothing has helped so much to draw people from the villages as the railways. Formerly few went further than the next county town more than once or twice a year, now an excursion to London is at all events a yearly occurrence with most. The social life of the villages too is entirely different. intermarriages were the usual thing; now people's brothers and sisters are in New York or Australia, and those who remain in their turn draw away from the old homes.

Cottages generally should be better than they are. none should have less than three bed and two sitting rooms, and a good garden of at least half an acre of ground, with some fruit trees, should be attached. But such as these cannot be put up for less than, say, £350, and the occupiers should understand that higher rents must be paid for such cottages. Some good landlords build them from philanthropic motives, but they cannot build sufficient, and philanthropy is not business. Remunerative interest only will induce a sufficient number of good houses to be built. One thing should be said to the honour of the labourer, there are no people who pay their rents so promptly and well. All occupiers too who have votes should pay their own rates. Collection would I know at first be difficult, but it would soon be overcome, and the occupiers would take a keener interest in parish affairs; not that parish affairs are very interesting now, even to the labourer. Everything is taken out of their hands and centred in 'boards,' and inspectors crush out the political interest of us all.

Village clubs are very well in their way, games and amusements also, but these alone will not keep men in the villages. We are all very much creatures of imitation. the fashion of the present day is the worship of money, and from this the labourer is no more exempt than the townsman, and more money can be made in the town. In the old days a man was respected for the excellence of his handicraft; now money is the god worshipped, but labour should be esteemed and respected, and it is well to remember money does not make a gentleman, and all should be gentlemen.

2. *The Tenant Farmer*—The old type of farmer is gone, either dead or pauperised. His capital is gone also. Much more than half the capital invested in agriculture twenty-five years ago has been lost. Still I believe farmers will prosper yet, but they must work out their own salvation, and they will if left alone; the less State aid or interference the better. Farmers too often, like the Athenians, have cried out for some new and unknown god to save them. They must rely upon themselves, make their occupation a

business, be industrious and frugal, and they will thrive. Agriculture never was and never will be a means of getting money quickly. You cannot turn over your capital as you can in trade over the counter. On the morning that I received your letter, intimating that you were about to honour me with a visit, I travelled by rail with three farmers, all prosperous men with balances on the right side at the bankers. I mentioned the subject of your visit and your excellent and interesting book, 'A Farmer's Year.' The first farmer remarked—but I don't think he spoke his real sentiments—'Oh, it's all very well writing, but it's a *landlord's* question. They have reduced their rents half and they must reduce it another half!' The second farmer did not agree. 'Why,' said he, 'when the landlord has paid his tithe and repairs he gets little or nothing. I say it's a *labour* question.' The third farmer listened only, then said, 'It's neither a question of landlords nor labour, it's a question of *men*.'

In sporting phraseology, I would always rather 'back a man than his farm,' and those before me were excellent illustrations of it. they had all prospered; their predecessors in better times on the same farms had all failed. Farmers must make their occupations a *business*. The old idea was to get a 'nice occupation.' I have seen many men fail in good occupations; I have seen many thrive on poor ones. There are some good fields on most farms, business tact is needed to find and develop their special capacities. Farmers often come and ask me how they should farm. My usual answer is, 'I have a great deal to do; you have nothing but your farm. Surely you should know better how to manage it than I can tell you. *Try*.'

It is often remarked there is no chance for a working man to rise, but that is not so. A man who means to get on will find his opportunity, most of the men in the parish where I live started as labourers: one occupies forty acres, another eighty, another 100, and one has just retired with a sufficiency for his old days. I have myself just let two of my farms, one of 130 acres, to a man who started as a shepherd: he first took a farm of twenty acres, then one of mine of forty-two acres. Other labourers have succeeded him on his smaller farm, and are working their way up. They make their farm their *business*, and are frugal and industrious, and they neither understand science nor desire any Acts of Parliament.

I was valuing on a farm the other day where the incoming tenant informed me he had some time ago worked for eight years as ploughman. He commenced his saving career by killing pigs for

the villagers, then he managed to hire a field or two, then a small farm, and now he and his son occupy three farms comprising two or three hundred acres. They scarcely know what an Act of Parliament is, and would scorn a 'Holdings Act' 'Let me alone, sir, and I'll make my own bargain.' Business aptitude, industry, and frugality have done it all. I know this locality probably better than most men, and I scarcely know a farmer who has made his occupation a 'business' and been frugal and industrious who has not thriven. It is not a question of rent, or labour, or the farm, it is the *man* and, let me add, his wife.

The Landlords and Owners—The agricultural depression visited these last, and probably will leave them last. The earlier method of meeting the tenants by a 10 or 15 per cent. reduction was all very well and very nice as an evidence of sympathy, but it by no means met the difficulty, and now lands in the Eastern Counties, where the land is chiefly arable, have deteriorated in selling value more than half. I doubt if I should be over the mark if I said two thirds. Let me give an instance of how little rent met the difficulty. When the depression was most acute I was asked why such a farm did not pay, it was a nice farm and the rent had been reduced half. Yet it did not pay. I said I can easily explain how little rent affects it. This farm contained 500 acres of arable, marsh, and sheep walks, the rent was £500 a year. It was what we call a sixty-acre cropping course, *i.e.* sixty acres wheat, sixty barley, sixty beans and clover, and sixty roots. When I first knew the farm forty years ago the sixty acres of wheat at eight sacks per acre, 480 coombs at 30s a coomb, the average price then = £720, sixty acres of barley, same per acre, 480 coombs at 20s., £480, total £1,200. Deduct rent, £500, leaving £700 for the tenant to spend on labour &c., which was cheaper then than now.

Well, at the time I was speaking the farm produced just as much—*i.e.* 960 coombs of wheat and barley—which at its then value produced the farmer £550. His rent reduced to half, £250, left to the tenant £300 to spend in labour &c. How can rent meet a case like this? It must be made a 'business,' as it now has been. (This tenant does not grow wheat.)

Many landlords have, I think, lacked breadth in the treatment of their land. The old sentiment which existed between a landlord and his tenant years ago is gone. I lament it much personally, but it must be more and more a business relationship. Leases should be drawn with more freedom of culture; a tenant must grow and turn into money what the neighbourhood will pay best

for.* In the North near large populations they do this with beneficial results to both parties. Holdings Acts are not required for this purpose and are not desired by the general body of farmers; they have been thrust upon them by urban press writers who do not understand the subject, and passed by timid Ministers who ought to know better, but are fearful of offending their constituents, which they would not be half so likely to do if they were more independent.

The worst of Holdings Acts is, that they must of necessity define treatment and cultivation, and draw out a system on one uniform line, whereas almost every farm requires a different treatment. What we require is more freedom, not more restriction, and landlords and tenants know far better what is best for them than any Act of Parliament can teach them, and I have always concluded that the interest of landlords and tenants runs on parallel lines, you cannot injure the one without the other suffering. During the second quarter of the last century the Legislature wisely did all they could to free property from complications of tenure and reduce it to simple freehold. During the last quarter of the century, it has most unwisely laboured to make it more complicated than ever.

You often see in the papers, 'We want a reform of the land laws,' but I venture to say that no man who makes this assertion has ten acres of his own. People will tell you there is delay in the transfer of land; there is no such thing. The time of settlement is invariably fixed by the two contracting parties for their own convenience. We are told again that the conveyance is so expensive, it is no such thing. You can transfer land as cheaply and as quickly as railway stocks. Again you are told farmers should have 'fixity of tenure,' but it is notorious that of late years tenants of medium-sized farms in the Eastern Counties at all events have been difficult to 'fix' in the holdings. Grass lands hitherto have not suffered so much as arable, but I believe we shall shortly see a change in this respect. Grazing has not paid so well the last few years, even here industry and frugality will best meet the difficulty. There is one thing which I think landlords might do more of, that is, plant trees on the poorer lands; and they should be encouraged in this by being exempt from the payment of rates and taxes, say, for the first ten years they are unproductive. As our foreign supplies become exhausted wood will be much more required in this country some fifty or a hundred years hence than it is now.

A word on the question of Protection as it is generally understood, or misunderstood, as applying to a tax on wheat only. Wheat must never be taxed, and the thrifty farmer desires it as little as anybody; they—the thrifty—usually buy more corn than they sell, and they like cheap feeding stuffs. What I should like to see and what I think most thoughtful people, no matter what their politics, would like to see would be a tax of, say, 2s 6d a sack of twenty stones on foreign flour. The result of such a tax would perhaps be to raise the price of wheat a shilling or perhaps two shillings a quarter. It would employ a vast amount of machinery and restore a decayed industry; it would find employment for a large number of workmen; it would produce in this country a vast amount of offal, the best and cheapest of feeding stuffs, and what perhaps is of still more importance, it would induce a stock of wheat to be kept in this country, larger, cheaper, and better than by any other means, and probably save us the cost of five or six war-ships. Ministers, I suppose, are too timid to impose such a tax. On principle no raw material should be taxed.

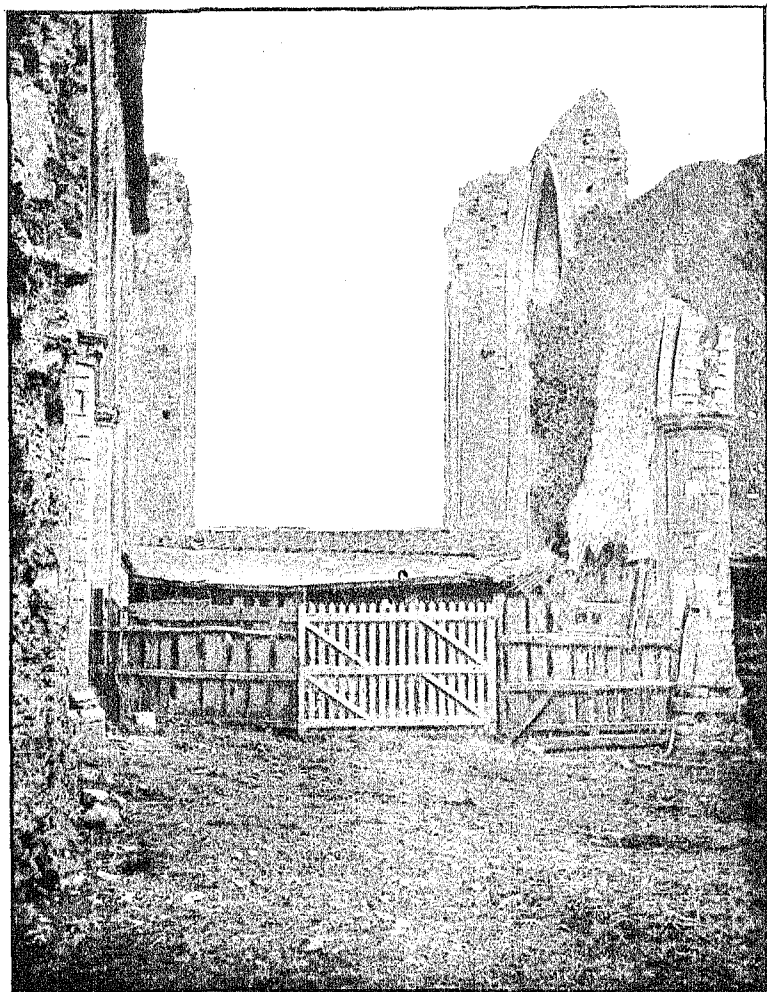
It will probably be years first, but I believe prosperity will come to the land again, and then it will again become the fashion to live upon it. It would be well too for Britain and Ireland if there were many more landowners, but this should in no way be attempted by legislation. We have far too much of this latter commodity. The true principle of government, I believe, is to give people as much liberty as possible to manage their own affairs, subject only to the restraint of not injuring their neighbour.

It will be observed that, as in the case of Mr. Clarke's opinions, which I have quoted in my chapter on Yorkshire, Mr. Flick does not deal with the national aspect of the rural exodus. Indeed he seems to anticipate a time when the labourers on the land will be fewer even than they are now, although he thinks that in the future the emigration may be lessened by competition in the towns. Apparently he considers also that but a small proportion of the existing race of farmers are really business men, and that before they can succeed as a class, this lack of intelligence or of industry must be rectified; in short, that they must change their character and habits, which among folk so conservative, will at best, be a lengthy process. He admits that agriculture and all to do with it have fallen upon very evil days; that values

have sunk a half or two thirds; that so far as the farmer is concerned it is not a question of rent &c. And yet he believes that 'prosperity will come to the land again, and then it will again become the fashion to live upon it.'

When? He does not say. Why and how? He does not tell us, unless indeed it is to be through the tax which he proposes should be levied upon foreign flour, that will raise corn 2s. a quarter, and bring in its train other advantages to the agricultural interests. Well, frankly I believe that this tax, upon which the existence of his far-off agricultural millennium seems principally to depend, is not in the least likely to be imposed. Will the future rulers of these islands be encouraged by the outcry and the party damage which has followed the reimposition of an infinitesimal registration duty upon foreign grain and flour to repeat the experiment upon a very much larger scale? For my part I doubt it, and, as I have said, I doubt also whether such a tax would be tolerated by the people under any circumstances which it is easy to foresee. Therefore if Mr. Flick really relies upon it to bring back prosperity to our agriculture, in my opinion he builds his house of hopes upon a foundation of sand. But of course he may have other reasons for the faith that is in him, which leads him, after the present period of disaster is done with, to look forward to a new agricultural East Anglia. Or he may be certain upon general principles that the wheel must go round merrily, and perhaps this, the unexpected of the proverb, will happen. At present, however, it seems to have jolted into a rut of the road to ruin.

Mr. Flick deprecates legislative interference. But would not such interference—let us say in matters like the freeing of copyholds from their present disabilities, or the equalisation of rates upon real and personal property—be an advantage to all concerned with English soil? Again, is it an actual fact that land can be transferred 'as cheaply and as quickly as railway stocks'? Yet again, would not his proposed remission by Parliament of rates and taxes upon lands which their



THE ALTAR, LEISTON ABBEY

owners planted with timber be an interference by the State of the very sort that Mr. Flick so strongly condemns?

Of course these are all matters of argument, and I am sure that Mr. Flick will not blame me for putting the other side of them before him and my readers, especially as I do so in no spirit of captious criticism, but rather in that of an earnest inquirer who seeks the truth and remedies for evils that are most patent to him.

One thing, however, upon which Mr. Flick touches is a question of fact rather than of opinion. He states from his own experience that small men can rise even in the county of Suffolk and in these days of low prices. Many have denied this to me; for instance, Mr. Slater, whose views I have recently recorded. Yet, as Mr. Flick says, it is true, at any rate in his neighbourhood, for I saw and conversed with some of these people myself. Amongst much that is disputable and depressing this is, I think, an encouraging circumstance. Certainly in that district there appears to be room for an increase of population, such as the multiplying of small-holders and their families might bring about, for during the two autumn days that I spent in driving through it I was much struck by the apparent paucity of its inhabitants.

Our host in South-east Suffolk was Mr. E. G. Pretyma, M.P., the owner, I believe, of about 20,000 acres of land in Suffolk, including 2,000 acres of heavy soil at Bacton, and of another estate of 6,000 acres in Lincolnshire, where Mr. Dudding, of Riby, whose ram sale I attended, is, I think, one of his tenants. Mr. Pretyma's beautiful seat, Orwell Park, is situated in the peninsula which lies between the rivers Orwell and Deben, about five miles south-east from Ipswich and seven from the sea. The park is bordered by the estuary of the Orwell, which here measures three quarters of a mile in breadth. Immediately adjoining the sea coast are excellent mixed soils, inside of which is a belt of light land whereon lie the great residential estates which extend up to the East Suffolk railway line. Beyond this the clay land is met with which is the heaviest soil in Suffolk. Round Nacton, where Orwell Park is

situated, all the soil is light and famous for its game. The making of pasture is the great difficulty here, as the land when laid down goes back to its native heath. In the drought of 1901 the clovers absolutely failed, with the result that there was no lamb feed. The mainstays of this light soil are sheep and barley, especially sheep.

Mr. Pretyman said he did not think that farmers on this land were making money, unless indeed they had some speciality, such as the breeding of pedigree Blackface Suffolk sheep, or sending milk to London. For the light-soil holdings there was no demand among tenants, as was shown by the fact that he was farming nearly 5,000 acres himself. This he preferred to do rather than let the land for nothing, as he found that after getting the farm clean he could make a rent of, I suppose, from 7s. 6d. to 10s. the acre, and a small interest on the capital employed. As light lands could be worked more cheaply, were easier to clean, and did not carry so much stock, this capital amounted only to £6 an acre. It will be noted that rent and interest could only be earned *after* the land had been got into good order, generally a long and expensive process.

All these in-hand holdings of Mr. Pretyman's are managed in a very business-like fashion; thus at the end of every week the superintendent of each farm gives in his labour-sheet on the outer leaf of which is a general report. This sheet shows also the total receipts and expenditure of the farm up to that week, states the names of all the labourers employed, with the wages they receive, and records what each man was doing on every day of the week. The total, with any extra expenses that have been incurred, such as lodgings for a carpenter employed hanging gates, &c., is then carried to a general account.

Mr. Pretyman said that in his experience the labour question turned on that of housing; given good houses and gardens the men could be found. He had spent great sums on cottages, of which he had built about a hundred during the twelve years that he had held the estate.

Mr. Pretymán then demonstrated to me what the owning of such a property means, even to a man who has other resources. I do not quote his figures as I am not sure whether I am at liberty to do so, but the capital expenditure amounted to an enormous sum and the annual loss to a total which only a rich man could face. The net result of all this outlay was that his income from the land had actually dwindled. Of the gross rental, I may add, over 25 per cent. goes out in tithe, rates, and taxes. In fact to own a great estate of this nature is to keep a ravening wolf of which the hunger is never satisfied. The more money that is spent on it, the more it demands. The farming does not really pay; the rents of the tenants, when all deductions have been made from them, do not equal the amounts expended on the buildings, the cottages erected bring in little or no interest, and so forth.

In short there are but two assets: the pleasure of living in a fine house on a large extent of private ground, and the value of the shootings, which here of course is very large. Indeed it seems probable that the owners of such properties would be better off if they abandoned all attempt at agriculture, except such as might be needful to the preservation of partridges, gave notice to their tenants, and contented themselves with letting their shooting to South African millionaires; a state of affairs that strikes me as melancholy enough. The alternative of course is to be very rich, to look upon the land as a luxury, and keep it in cultivation from a sense of duty.

Luckily in the case of this particular property there is building land at Felixstowe, the value of which mitigates the situation. On the other hand there is some poor heavy soil which Mr. Pretymán described as absolutely worthless, since it lacks any sporting value. The tithe on it amounts to 5s. the acre and the rent will not meet the cost of drainage and buildings. He said that he would be better without it, but it had belonged to the family since the fourteenth century, and could not therefore be abandoned.

Small-holdings, Mr. Pretymán declared, were not suit

able to this land, which lacked both grass and buildings. It was a country of large farms of from 500 to 1,000 acres. Generally speaking he thought that the agriculture of the district and all connected with it were going back progressively. Between 1893 and 1899 they seemed to have reached bottom, but now he feared that they were sinking still lower again, the bad price of all they had to sell and the high price of all they had to buy killed the industry.

By way of remedies he suggested that the burdens on real and personal property ought to be equalised. This class of taxation, in his opinion, should be managed on the same lines as the income-tax; it ought to be a rating income-tax without exemptions. Also something might be done to improve the system of rural education and to help forward co-operation, the establishment of creameries, &c. Further the Board of Agriculture might be strengthened. Protection he did not put forward as a remedy; like myself, he considered that it was impracticable.

On the question of whether cottages should be let to the tenant or to the labourer direct, Mr. Pretyman said very truly that if a labourer wanted to be absolute master of his own dwelling, and not liable to ejection at the will of his employer, he ought to pay its economic value in the shape of rent. As it was, the price for which he let his cottages to tenants, in fact meant that he subscribed 5s. a week towards the wages of the men. In the same way if he let the cottage to the labourer direct at the present uneconomic rent of 1s. 6d. a week, and that labourer worked for another man, he subscribed the balance between the actual rent and the economic rent for the benefit of some other estate.

These are indisputable facts, but the position, equally indisputable, remains that few Eastern Counties labourers will pay, or can afford to pay, more than at the outside 2s. a week for their cottages, and that a decent dwelling, if it must be let at this figure, cannot be built to return a fair interest on the money invested. Therefore cottages so let must be looked upon as a remission of rent to the tenant, who, what-

ever arrangement he makes with his labourer, ought, strictly speaking, to pay their full value to the landlord. Of course, however, he does nothing of the sort. This burden, like every other in the long run, falls on the back of the owner of property.

The park at Orwell slopes down to the wooded banks of the estuary, where at this spot vessels of 3,000 tons can lie. It is dotted with great oaks and is very beautiful, while on the farther shore of the mile-wide water stands the grey, square-built house of Woolverstone. On the higher land the soil is light, but down by the estuary it is of a denuded clay character. Here the grass is better than that above, which is somewhat wiry. Black Angus cattle ran in this park, which were crossed with a white Shorthorn bull in order to produce the blue-grey animals so prized by graziers and butchers.

Here I saw a new kind of farming, that of oysters. These were bred in ponds in to which salt water from the estuary was allowed to enter from time to time, but not continually, as then the spat would be carried away by the outflow. The ponds are cleaned every year, after which 200 hermaphrodite mothers are inserted in each of them, where they produce their spat, which ultimately settle in the shape of minute oysters upon wooden rods at the bottom of the pool. Here, the season of 1901 being favourable to their development, I saw them clinging thick as aphids fly to a rosebush. They are born in June, and in the following June are sold by the bushel to the owners of oyster beds, who take them away and pay for them in accordance with the number that survive a year after their immersion in the open laying. The young take about four years to come to maturity, two to grow and two to thicken. The life of the oyster, by the way, is not supposed to exceed ten or twelve years.

At Orwell also I was shown a duck-decoy, the first that I had ever seen. It consisted of two quiet sheets of water surrounded by fir trees, on which wild and some tame fowl swam by hundreds. We took up our position in a little hut

and watched.. Presently the keeper of the decoy, Skelton by name, whose father, I think, had held that office before him, appeared creeping along under shelter of a zigzag reed fence. With him was a small but very active red dog which leapt over the screens projecting from the fence and thus attracted the attention of the duck, that doubtless mistook him for their natural enemy, a fox, and swam along parallel to the bank in order to watch his movements. Every time that the dog sprang over one of the reed screens he was rewarded by a piece of bread, which he caught in mid-air, thrown by the invisible man, who, by the way, held a lump of burning peat in front of his mouth to deceive the keen scent of the ducks. This went on until the decoys and their unsuspecting friends were drawn a long way down a gradually narrowing net tunnel ending in a kind of bag. Of these there were four—one at each corner of the pool—that were made use of according to the direction of the wind. Here the decoys stopped to feed on barley that had been scattered in the water, but just as their companions were beginning to grow suspicious and to think that it was time to go, the keeper appeared from behind the last screen and began to wave his hat, and dance like a madman, though always in utter silence.

Then the wildfowl, most of which on this occasion were widgeon and teal, determined to depart. One or two of the more wary ones, that perhaps had been there before, flew outwards past Mr. Skelton to the mouth of the tunnel, but the others fled away from him inwards, and in another moment were entangled in that evil net. Like a flash, their arch enemy, the man, sprang upon them, and, having twisted the net to prevent their escape, put an end to their terrified flappings and quackings by breaking their necks at his leisure. Very soon it was over, and he emerged hot but triumphant, his hands full of limp, bright-plumaged teal and widgeon that a minute before had been so full of grace and life.

It was all extremely ingenious and well managed, but, like most of our dealings with our fellow animals, very cruel—as cruel as the duck is to the worm or the water snail. What

I did not understand and what its owner seemed unable to explain to me, however, was the exact amount of intelligence that the dog puts into the game. Does he jump over the reed fences and run cunningly in and out, knowing that thereby he lures ducks to their doom, or is his only object to earn the pieces of bread which are thrown to him? As many as 4,000 wild-fowl are taken in this Orwell decoy in a year, a catch of 2,000 being necessary to pay the expense of its upkeep.

On one day of our stay with him Mr Pretymaⁿ took us to see some of his in-hand farms. The first of these that we visited was the Foxhall Farm, of which Mr. Horace Dawson was bailiff. This is a holding of 1,250 acres of which 800 are arable, 400 heath, and fifty grass. Three hundred and fifty ewes were kept on it, of which the lambs were sold out in July at an average price of 31s. Here I came across another case of land that is poisonous to sheep.

The shepherd told me that on a certain young layer twenty-six lambs became paralysed and died owing to the presence of a plant that grew there, of which, however, I could not discover the name. These poisonous pieces of land were, he said, well known. On one side of the road it might be quite safe for sheep and on the other deadly. He told me also that folding sheep on a two-year layer there would give them red-worm in the lungs—'strongylus' I think it is called—the same disease which is so fatal in Lincolnshire. The capital employed in that farm was £6 an acre. The system practised on this land, which was tilled with a double-furrow plough drawn by three horses, was: layers with manure; oats; kail or root crop without manure; and barley. Both Mr. Pretymaⁿ and Mr. Dawson told me they considered kail about the best crop that it would grow, and that which we saw there was particularly good. The sheep, I was informed, did exceedingly well upon it.

Here we saw the great Heath which runs from Ipswich to the Deben, a length of seven miles, and is from one to three miles broad. Also there were extensive young planta-

tions, then in their third year, of larch, Scotch fir, spruce, chestnut, and a few oaks. After the land has been double ploughed these trees are planted in it four feet apart, and carefully fenced to keep out stock and game. On the whole they were doing well, although on some scaldy soil the drought had checked them. No wheat was grown on this farm. At Foxhall, where we saw old coprolite pits, the fabric of a deserted church has been made use of as farm buildings, and I was told that when sinking posts for the cow-yard the labourers had come across skeletons of the dead who lie buried there.

In this district the Crag, a shelly deposit of gravel and sand, generally overlying London clay, is very common. This Crag is a natural sponge, and by bleeding it pure water is obtained that never varies in quality or quantity. Below the Crag slope lies the valley of the Brightwell stream, which used to be an impassable bog of black peat on London clay, but now has been drained and is the grazing ground of young stock, Red Polls, Shorthorns, and blue-roan Angus. The Red Polls that I saw here I thought of a very good quality, and the horses were of the old Suffolk breed, which Arthur Young admired so much long ago, rather small in size, but docile, well-shaped animals, chestnut in colour, with their eyes set very wide apart.

The next farm we visited was that of Brightwell, which contained 350 acres of arable, 200 of heath, and fifty of grass or marsh. Here eighty head of stock were reared every year upon twenty breeding cows. Each of these suckled four calves, whereof two were put on her at a time, care being taken that the calves were always given to the same cow, which, of course, was not milked. On this farm new buildings were in course of erection at a cost of 25s. the foot run. They were built with a concrete pinning and had iron posts set at intervals to carry the corrugated iron roofs, the sides being formed with tarred deal boardings. This struck me as an exceedingly cheap, durable, and commodious form of agricultural premises. It was, I believe, invented by Mr.

Pretyman, who has employed it extensively on his estates, making use of home-made cement, shingle carted from the beach, and the labour of his own workmen.

On this farm once stood Brightwell Hall, whereof only the old stable, laundry and part of the garden wall now remain. The pure spring of water whence it took its name still bubbles out beneath them, and in the meadow below I could trace banks of the ornamental ponds which it filled in days bygone. Once this was the seat of the Barnardiston family, and chestnut trees, which, I suppose, they planted, still grow about the place. Another family of note—the Essingtons—also lived in this neighbourhood.

Here there were some excellent Suffolk horses and a very good herd of Red Polls, rich of hue and compact in build. They were divided into three lots: No. 1 of calves of about six months; No. 2 of yearlings on the meadows; and No. 3 two-year-olds fattening in the stalls. This farm was somewhat infested with a pest called sand-weed, which is so strong that if not eradicated, it will kill not only the crop but every other weed as well. Also it is poisonous to lambs.

The little and rarely visited Church of St. John the Baptist at Brightwell, a village that has a population of about sixty souls, contains some interesting monuments to members of the Essington family. One is to the memory of Anna Essington, 'a gracious Virgin,' obit 1660, whose effigy and dying words, 'My mortal shape shall put on immortality,' are graven on her monument. Another, still more touching, is to the memory of Thomas Essington, a child of six years of age who died in 1556. The boy is represented holding a hand, I presume that of his mother, while with the other he points upward. On the margin of the marble is engraved:

His Owne words
Christ will rais mee.

These struck me as very affecting relics of griefs that must have been bitter in their day, but now, like those who

suffered them, are long forgotten. May the sweet and trustful aspirations of these poor children be fulfilled

On the walls of this quaint and tiny church also hung two helms, spurs, and gauntlets once worn, I suppose, by knightly Essingtons or Barnardistons.

Another place that we visited on this estate was the admirably tended nursery which is in the charge of a Scotch overseer. Here were larch, spruce, Austrian and Corsican pines, silver and Scotch firs, monkey-trees which do very well, sweet chestnuts, oaks, Myrobolan plum which flourishes on poor soil, sea buckthorn, hardy bamboos, and many other sorts of shrubs, all of which are used in the estate plantations. This nursery, I remember, was well and ingeniously enclosed with old 3-inch boiler tubes, bought for sixpence a piece, and drilled at intervals to receive the strands of wire which made the fence.

At a large dinner party which Mr. Pretyman kindly gave to enable me to meet the agriculturists of the neighbourhood I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of some of the leading farmers of this part of Suffolk, among them Messrs. Alfred, Herbert, and Clement Smith, J. C. and Spencer Dawson, E. Packard, G. Fisk, Herman Biddell, L. Symonds, S. Sherwood, H. Read, H. Snell, and Mr. Keith, a Scotch gentleman who farmed both here and in Norfolk on Lord Leicester's estate, where I had the pleasure of meeting him again.

Several of these gentlemen were so good as to give me some account of their systems of husbandry and of the agricultural position in their neighbourhoods. Thus Mr. Spencer Dawson said that he farmed 771 acres of light land, of which 100 were grass, at Stratton Hall, a parish consisting only of his house and two or three cottages which is joined to that of Trumley St. Martin, and situated on the north bank of the Orwell, about three or four miles from the sea. I am told that on this farm, which was held by Mr. Dawson's father before him, Crag was first used as a dressing for the land. I much regret having neglected to ask Mr. S. Dawson at what date

this is said to have happened, as I find that when Arthur Young wrote on this district in 1771 the custom was already common, since he says :—

Another most uncommon circumstance in the husbandry of this country is the use of a manure peculiar to them, which they call *crag*. It is found in almost all the hills and higher lands in the country, at various depths . . . And yet it undoubtedly enriches the soil far more than any marle; for the farmers here lay on but ten or twelve cartloads an acre, and the effect is amazingly great, with this uncommon circumstance, the soil is ever after greatly the better for it; nor do they in twelve or fifteen years, as is common with such small quantities of marle, find the benefit declining fast . . .

The redder the *crag* is, the better they reckon it . . .

The effect of it is so great, that in breaking up the poor heaths of this country, they have had a succession of exceeding fine crops of all sorts from such parts as they have manured with it, while at the same time, other parts unmanured have scarcely yielded the seed again. All the rich inclosures of this country have been *cragged*.

From this passage it is evident that, whenever *cragging* originated, it must have been long before the year 1771.

The following passage shows that Arthur Young thought very highly of the farmers and their farming in the Woodbridge district as he saw them in his day. Things have changed since then. Our Suffolk husbandry is still well enough in places, but poverty has laid its heavy hand upon the farmer, and but too often his land tells the tale. My own opinion is that at the beginning of the twentieth century, better general farming is to be found in Yorkshire than in any other part of England that I have visited, chiefly because neither the owners nor the occupiers of land in that county are so poor as is the case elsewhere. Mr. Young says :—

Upon the whole, this corner of *Suffolk* is to be recommended for practising much better husbandry, all things considered, than any other track of country with which I am acquainted.

Their *crag* husbandry, their culture of carrots, their breed of horses, are circumstances peculiar, no where else to be seen. Their management of the pea and bean crops is much more masterly

than anything met with in most parts of the kingdom. Their courses of crops are unexceptionable:—in a word, they exert every effort of good husbandry to command success. They enjoy it—and well deserve the fruit of their labours. That of *Norfolk* is justly famous; but everything considered, it must undoubtedly yield to the more gardenlike culture of this country—their crops are far superior to any thing in the neighbouring county

Flanders has long been mentioned as the most perfectly cultivated country in *Europe*. What the soil is I know not; but I will venture to assert that,—soil equal, no *Flanders* husbandry can exceed the above described.

This is high praise indeed.

To return. Mr. Dawson kept pedigree Blackface sheep and Shorthorn cows, which he crossed with an Angus bull, as he found that nothing grazed so well as these two breeds. Of wheat he grew 50 acres—the area used to be 150—and of barley, which sometimes was a sample fit for Burton, about 400 coomb. His calves were weaned at seven days old and home grazed for a while, after which they were sent down to feed at the seaside. His lambs he sold out fat at four months of age, at about 35s., but these, he said, were apt to die on sour land, of which there was some upon his holding. Mr. Dawson added that to get a plant of root out of it men needed to be born and bred upon this soil. They used to follow the four-course shift, but this was altered now, also they kept their layers down two years. Labour had been bad, but at that time they had sufficient, the wages averaging 16s. a week the year round; they were 11s. in 1887 when he began to farm.

For this farm his father paid £1,050 a year rent and the tithe, but now it stood at £706 tithe free. Evidently, however, in the opinion of Mr. Spencer Dawson the position was not one that could be met by a remission of rent, since he said that he was quite disheartened by his experiences in farming and took a very black view of the future.

Mr. J. Charles Dawson, of the Park Farm, Nacton, comprising 1,000 acres, of which 150 were grass, said that he thought the prospect very gloomy. It was not a question

of rent, but of prices and seasons. He had been on that farm for forty years and declared that if he paid no rent at all, he would be worse off in 1901 than he was when it cost him £1 an acre. The only successful men were those with some speciality, such as the breeding of pedigree Red Polls or Blackface sheep, or those who kept a dairy. Mr. Charles Dawson also crossed Shorthorn cows with the Angus. He said that the resulting blue-greys, a breed which he was one of the earliest to initiate, fetched 1s a stone more than any other cattle. His steers were caked throughout their lives, and he sent his cattle out fat at Christmas; his milk being sold at the seaside. His land was on the side of a tidal river which enabled him to buy London manure delivered by boat at from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a ton. Of labour he had sufficient but his cottage accommodation was poor, many of the dwellings having but one bedroom.

Mr. J. C. Dawson pointed out that the great difference between the seventies and the present day was that during the former period corn sold well, and the farmer could recover himself from the effects of a bad season. Now the margin of possible profit was too low to allow of this, and in 1901 they had to face one of the worst years that he remembered since 1868. He was of opinion that Lincolnshire land at £1 an acre was worth more than that which he farmed if given for nothing. On such lands, however, he said that the game rents were extraordinarily high, as much sometimes as 3s. the acre.

He declared that in this district the small farmers did the work of two men and fed on the food of one, by which means they managed to live.

Mr. C. Smith, of Trimley, three miles from Felixstowe, said that he farmed 350 acres of good heavy land, which included 100 acres of marsh, half of his holding being in grass. Of this grass 50 per cent. had been laid down within the past ten years and done well. The capital he employed was £10 the acre, and the rent he paid 25s. an acre. His business was dairying; indeed he conducted a small dairy factory, selling

the milk and other produce in Felixstowe. Also during the months of April, May, and June he made Cheddar cheese, which fetched 72s 6d. a hundredweight, one gallon of milk producing a bare pound of cheese. Mr. Smith in addition grew barley—his principal corn crop—beans and oats that were consumed on the place, maize and lucerne—of which he meant to grow more—and five acres of potatoes.

Of stock he kept some pedigree Blackface sheep, although he said that cattle and sheep clashed, also pigs which did well and lived on the dairy refuse. His cows were of any breed that would milk, the selected heifer calves being kept and the rest sold out. In that season—which he declared was the worst in his twelve years' experience—these cows had consumed a great deal of artificial food. He thought that the drought would cause him to lose £150 on the plough portion of his land, and said that nothing would induce him to take a purely arable farm. The wages that he paid were from 16s. to 18s. a week rent free, with harvest money extra.

Mr. C. Smith was one of the deputation of Suffolk farmers who visited Denmark in 1901, and presented a report to the East Suffolk County Council, to which I have alluded in my Conclusions. What he saw there caused him to become a strong believer in co-operative dairy factories, which he said he should like to see established in England.

Mr. L. Symonds, who held 700 acres of heavy land, of which fifty were grass, nine miles north of Ipswich, said that things were going very badly. Labour was short with them, and they had no boys. The young men went away, and, having begun it, continued in that practice. From 25s. an acre his rent had fallen to 20s., tithe free. He followed the four-course shift, bought in cattle and sheep, and grazed them, but kept no ewe flock. Beef had risen 1s. 6d. a stone in price, also in that dry year his barley had done well, and brought him in £1 a coomb, so he felt a little more cheerful; but grazing, he declared, left small margin for profit.

Mr. E. Moorsom, agent to Mr. Pretyma, by way of illustration of the fall of land values, quoted the instance of

400 acres of heavy soil within eight miles of Ipswich which, including the money that had been spent upon it, was bought in the good times for £20,000. Within the last seven years this estate sold for £1,800. At Bacton heavy land had sold at £5 the acre not long before. On this wheat land tithe was heavy, but on the light soil much less. It would, perhaps, he said, be wise for owners to give such land away in order to be rid of it. Labour was the greatest difficulty that they had to contend with, worse even than the prices. Men were so scarce and dear that farmers were not employing them, with the result that the cultivation of the soil was going back. Although the labourers were doing better than they had ever done before, more of them were wanted, but they would not come. They had difficulty in keeping men, who went off if a word were spoken to them. There was a dearth of able-bodied workers on the land, and the young ones departed—an exodus which was, he thought, encouraged by the village schoolmasters. Also those who remained were not so good as their fathers they would not take any interest in their business, and did as little as possible for their money. The wages for day men were from 12s to 13s., and for horsemen from 14s to 15s. a week. Harvest money came to from £6 to £8, and cottages were rented at from £4 to £4 10s. per annum.

Farmers, he thought, just lived and paid their very reduced rents. In some years they lost money, and in others made up the loss, but they did not put anything by. It was very difficult to find a good tenant, and the season of 1901 had increased the despondency among the class. Mr. Moorsom could see no signs of new blood coming into the farming industry. The mainstays of the district were sheep and barley, but of late the sample on the light lands had been bad, and the fat sheep trade was also bad. Some money had been made out of high-class flocks of Blackface sheep, but he did not consider the market in these pedigree animals one to be relied on, although just then there had been rather a boom in them.

Mr. Moorsom told me that such an estate as Orwell brought in nothing beyond the value of the sporting rights, and sufficient, perhaps, for the actual upkeep of the house. If the owners of these properties did not possess other means they must let their places. The land had lost its legitimate value as an investment, and he had long ago given up the hope of its producing any return. In short, in this respect the condition of affairs in that part of Suffolk was, he declared, terrible. That not much money was to be made out of farms in hand, at any rate in 1901, was shown by the following figures. On one 500-acre farm there was a profit of £30 to cover rent, interest, and living expenses. Another of the same size showed £100 profit, but this was not yet checked. Another was £100 to the bad. Another, also of 500 acres, showed loss of rent, interest, and £400. Another, loss of rent, interest, and something over. Another, loss of rent, interest, and about £50. In good years, however, the results were sometimes better. There were some small-holders on the edge of the Heath, a few of whom grew vegetables and appeared to do fairly well.

Roughly speaking, on that estate the fall in the value of rentals since 1875 was 50 per cent. plus the tithe. Here are three typical instances: A light land farm of 517 acres, of which sixty-five were marsh. Rent in 1875, £728, tenant paying tithe. Rent in 1900, £400, of which £50 had been remitted since 1897, the landlord paying the apportioned tithe of £132 18s.

No. 2.—A light land farm of 845 acres, of which 210 acres are feeding marshes. Rent in 1875, £1,000, tenant paying tithe. Rent in 1900, £550, landlord paying apportioned tithe of £163 2s.

No. 3.—Heavy land farm, nearly all arable, of 288 acres. Rent in 1875, £540. Rent in 1900, £250, landlord paying tithe—amount not stated.

By way of an appendix to my account of the Orwell property I add here the balance-sheet of an East Anglian estate of somewhat smaller size for the years 1899 and 1900, which has been kindly furnished to me by its owner. I believe that this property includes a great deal of heavy land.

*Balance-sheet of an East Anglian estate of 15,000 acres with gross income of £10,000 a year
in the years 1899 and 1900.*

SUFFOLK

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RECEIPTS

	1899		1900	
	£	d	£	d.
1. Farm rents . . .	7,181	14 1	7,152	11 3
2. Cottage and allotment rents	387	9 8	508	9 2
3. House rents . . .	310	1 4	310	5 1
4. Manorial dues . . .	89	13 7	69	15 5
5. Park and woods . . .	169	11 1	327	7 5
6. Rabbits &c . . .	138	15 9	125	10 10
7. Garden produce . . .	30	17 2	61	9 3
8. Schools . . .	202	9 11	211	17 11
9. Shooting rents . . .	1,340	0 0	1,340	0 0
10. Sundries . . .	155	7 2	166	7 6

£9,955 19 9 10,068 13 10

OUTGOINGS.

	1899		1900	
	£	d.	£	d.
1. Charges on estate . . .	740	10 1	448	2 0
2. Rates and taxes . . .	486	1 0	775	12 3
3. Drainage and Land Improvement Co charges	1,849	9 5	1,845	1 9
4. Tithes . . .	1,664	0 6	1,632	0 8
5. Insurance premiums . . .	174	17 5	213	12 8
6. Estate expenses, woods, roads, and fences . . .	533	6 1	586	8 0
7. Gardens . . .	612	15 6	584	19 5
8. Schools . . .	287	12 6	257	17 4
9. Management . . .	720	0 0	720	0 0
10. Repairs of farm buildings and cottages . . .	1,467	6 3	1,520	4 10
11. Mansion (repairs, coal &c.) and sundry personal expenses, such as forage, wages of caretaker, &c . .	420	1 11	553	18 2
12. Subscriptions and pensions	650	6 1	519	14 8
13. Sundries . . .	118	0 11	112	9 0
14. Balance paid to owner	231	12 2	298	13 1
	£9,955	19 9	10,068	13 10

It will be observed that the above interesting document shows that the encumbrances on the property concerned are comparatively insignificant, and consist mainly of the charges of the Drainage and Land Improvement Company for money spent on the betterment of the soil, which at the time of its borrowing would, it was thought, prove remunerative. The shooting is let, and the only other extra expense incurred is for the upkeep of the mansion and gardens, which might, I presume, be let, although—unless the shooting went with them—not for a large sum. The item of subscriptions and pensions is one that must be reckoned with in all such accounts, and presumably, could not be reduced. The net result is that out of 15,000 acres of land the owner received in 1899, £231 12s. 2d., and in 1900, £298 13s. 1d.—that is, about the income derived from a poor country vicarage.

Could anything exemplify more clearly the extent of the disaster which has overtaken all who have to do with the land in the Eastern Counties, the labourer alone excepted, whose position has somewhat improved of late years?

Another large estate with which I am personally acquainted, whereof this seems a convenient place to speak, is that of Flixton, in my own neighbourhood. It is noted for its beautiful house and park and belongs to Sir Frederick Adair, Bart.

Mr Thomas J. Grierson, agent to the property, whom I saw at Flixton, said that he had a life-long experience in the management of land and farms. He thought that on the Flixton estate the farmers were doing pretty well; that is to say, they lived, paid their reduced rents punctually, and had no arrears. He knew even of some on the best farms who were putting money away. The area of the property, which was somewhat scattered and contained all classes of land, was 14,000 acres. The average rent of the heavy land was 16s. an acre, of the mixed lands about 14s. an acre, and of the light land from 3s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.

an acre. Here I give the rentals of ten farms in 1875 and in 1902

Farm Acres	1875 £	1902 £	
450	652	340	Heavy land.
366	600	300	"
305	290	200	Mixed land.
162	275	150	"
169	178	100	Heavy land.
76	110	80	Mixed land.
79	125	90	"
37	65	42	Good light land.
33	57	37	"
115	100	35	Bad light land.

These lands, Mr. Grierson informed me, however, were never heavily rented, and for this reason the fall on them is not so conspicuous as in many instances on other properties. Also they have about 25 per cent. of pasture of fairly good quality, which helps to keep up their value, although, he remarked with much truth, grass lands in Suffolk are generally very badly farmed. Indeed from my own observation I can state that four farmers out of six in these parts of the Eastern Counties seem to think that all a pasture requires is to be mown year after year in summer and fed bare, often by cows or ewes, in autumn, winter, or early spring.

In the same way they do not hesitate to turn down horses and sheep to nibble out the crowns of the new-laid grasses, especially if these have been paid for by the landlord, who, in a year or two, or after the pasture has failed, will probably be told that it must be ploughed up, as the seed was bad. The truth is, of course, that, to give satisfactory results, more particularly on poorish or medium land, pasture requires as good treatment as does arable. Yet it is very difficult to persuade many farmers—and I may add bailiffs—even to take the trouble to have the thistles mown and the docks pulled.

Mr. Grierson said that the upkeep on the Flixton

property during the five years that he had been agent there amounted to about 35 per cent of the rental. During this time £7,000 had been spent on the buildings alone, of which sum only £1,200 returned interest in the shape of rent paid by the tenant. These expenses, however, had been abnormally heavy, and he hoped that in the future they would be reduced to 20 per cent. on the rentals. There was, he added, a keen application for farms of from 100 to 150 acres. Large farms—by which he meant anything above 300 acres—were, on the other hand, most difficult to let. The reasons for this were the lack of capital amongst tenants and the dislike of those who chanced to possess it, to risking large sums upon the land. Thus an applicant for one of the holdings of 420 acres who possessed £5,000, at the last moment declined the bargain saying: ‘I can sit at my own fireside and get £200 a year for my money; I think I will do that instead of taking your farm.’

Mr. Grierson informed me that on the in-hand farms he had experienced no difficulty as to labour, but taking the estate as a whole there was a good deal of complaint, both as to its scarcity and as to the quality of that which was available. Most of the hands were old, young men being rare; nor would these learn skilled work. Indeed it was very difficult to find good thatchers or stack builders who were not advanced in years, and when these died out he could not say what would happen. The boys did not seem inclined to go onto the land and learn husbandry: they shifted off elsewhere, and he could not recall any instances of men who had returned from the towns. Still, owing to the slackness of trade, the local scarcity was not so much felt as it had been a year or two ago. Thus when they were planting at Flixton during the present year (1902) they had bricklayers and painters employed in digging holes for the young trees. Such men were good enough for a job of that sort, but of course useless in the ordinary routine of farm work.

His experience was that the larger tenants on this class

of Suffolk property were more prosperous than the smaller men, although there was greater competition for the little farms. He knew of no instance of a farm labourer in the neighbourhood rising to be a tenant; which was rather a melancholy circumstance, especially as in Wales and Cheshire, where he had spent seventeen years, his experience was quite different. This he attributed to the fact that there the men had more energy and ambition than the Suffolk labourers, who received a lower wage and did much less work than their brethren in the more northerly counties. Still he had great sympathy with these Eastern Counties peasants, who, he believed, had been so oppressed and underpaid by the farmers during the good times that all courage and hope were crushed out of their natures. They had nothing to look forward to, therefore they looked forward to nothing.

Mr Grierson thought that, considered as investments, such properties as Flixton were impossible; certainly they did not pay. The position was very serious both for the owners and for the Country, but he added that of course all landed property was on a false basis now-a-days. In the Eastern Counties, at any rate at present rentals, if the prime cost of buildings, drainage, and other improvements were allowed for, the land itself brought in less than no return.

In new countries 'prairie value,' of which people talked so much, meant some value, however small; but here, after deducting the sums laid out upon its raw material, the land was profitless to its owner and, in fact, thrown in to the tenant with the buildings and improvements made thereon. He considered that all over the country the owner class had been much the hardest hit of those connected with the land. Where they did not possess other means they have been and are being destroyed. He could not foresee the end of it, but unless a man had a private fortune, a large inherited estate was a millstone round his neck. The cost of upkeep and building was higher than it had been, tradesmen's

bills, demands of every kind, had all increased, while the receipts grew less and less. At that moment he knew of no owner in Suffolk who lived on what he received out of his land.

For the future he could see no hope unless Protection was revived. Personally he was not ashamed of being a strong Protectionist, especially as he did not look at the matter merely from the landed interest point of view. He thought that it was an Imperial question. The land could not pay men enough to keep them on it, and how were the cities and the Services to be recruited if not from the land?

Better wages and some hope of advancement were necessary to retain people in the villages, and he did not see how these could be furnished unless the produce of the soil were made more remunerative to its cultivator. In his opinion the great obstacle to the establishment of small-holdings was the lack of cheap carriage, which the charges of the railway companies made impossible. Small-holdings in all the remoter districts were useless because, owing to the cost of its conveyance thither, their produce could not be put upon the markets at a price that would remunerate the grower. He thought the scheme that I had put before him of an Agricultural Post (the details of which I have set out in my concluding chapter) admirable, as it would be a great help to small-holdings, which he believed it would pay the country to foster. He hoped that it would be adopted by the Government.

Before we parted Mr. Grierson showed me the 1901 report of Mr. Mends-Gibson, the medical officer for the Wangford Union, in which he stated that the cottage accommodation in the district was very defective, with the exception of that on the Flixton estate, where it was ample. He showed me also the plans of their new cottages, of which a number have been built. These are excellent dwellings of pleasing appearance, constructed of brick with tiled roofs. They contain three bedrooms, two of them with fireplaces,

large living room, eleven feet by nine feet nine inches, scullery, nine feet by eight feet nine; pantry, nine feet by five, with copper, oven, sink, soft-water well, outside convenience, and coal house. These cottages are erected at a cost of £300 a pair, a figure that compares favourably, when their size, appearance, and accommodation are considered, with any that I remember to have seen in England.' Perhaps, however, the fact that Mr. Grierson is his own architect has something to do with the lowness of their cost

Mr. E. Levett-Scrivener, R.N., whose family have lived for many generations at Sibton Abbey, between Halesworth and Saxmundham, has kindly furnished me with some most valuable tables compiled from accounts in his possession, showing the comparative prices of farm produce and cost of labour at Sibton in 1782 and 1902, and the rentals of specimen farms in 1805, 1824, and 1902.

The inferences that Mr. Levett-Scrivener draws from these tables will, I am sure, be read with great interest. As he pointed out to me in conversation also, the upshot of them is that the farmer in 1902 is better off than he was in 1805 and 1824, although—and this I think he does not mention—he is without doubt incomparably worse off than he was between 1850 and 1875. The labourer too, Mr. Levett-Scrivener shows, has greatly improved his position, whereas, even as compared with 100 years ago, the landlord loses heavily on his rent. Mr. Levett-Scrivener thinks that the labour trouble is exaggerated, as he has found no difficulty in getting all the men he wants, although he says that the farmers complain much. As I have before had occasion to point out in this book, the explanation is, of course, that the gentleman who farms is the last to suffer from the lack of labour, since while there are any men available they will work for him in preference to his tenant-farmer neighbours. Of this fact Mr. Levett-Scrivener explains the reasons with sufficient clearness in his penultimate paragraph and in the two by which it is preceded.

Table showing comparative Value of Farm Produce on a Farm at Sibton, Suffolk, 1777-1782 and 1902.

	1777-1782						1902									
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.				
Good hay, per load	3	0	0	to 4	2	6	.	3	0	0	to 6	0	0			
Straw	1	0	0	—	.	1	0	0	„	1	10	0				
Oats, per coomb	0	7	0	„	0	8	0	.	0	9	0	„	0	13	0	
Wheat	14s.	16s.	(1l. 3s. 1782)	0	14	0	„	0	15	0	„	0	15	0	0	
Barley	0	10	6	to 0	12	0	.	0	12	6	„	1	0	0	0	
Beans	0	12	9	—	.	0	15	0	„	0	18	0	0	18	0	
Peas	0	16	6	—	.	0	17	0	„	0	18	0	0	18	0	
Sheep, per head	0	10	0	„	0	15	0	.	1	5	0	„	3	0	0	
Lambs	0	6	6	„	0	8	0	.	0	13	0	„	2	0	0	
Cows	4	0	0	„	6	0	0	.	5	0	0	„	21	0	0	
'Buds'	1	11	0	—	.	1	9	0	„	8	8	0	0	8	0	
Steers (fat),	12	12	0	(highest)	.	11	0	0	„	24	0	0	0	24	0	0
Beef, per lb.	0	0	2½	—	.	0	0	6	„	0	0	10	0	0	10	0
Mutton, per lb.	0	0	2	—	.	0	0	7	„	0	0	10	0	0	10	0
Cart horses, per hd.	1	0	0	to 14	0	0	.	10	0	0	„	50	0	0	0	0

Table showing comparative Cost of Labour on a Farm at Sibton, Suffolk, from Accounts, 1777-1782 and 1902.

	1777-1782				1902				
	s	d	s	d.	s	d	s	d.	
Ordinary labourers, per diem	1	4	to 1	6	.	2	0	to 2	4
Horsemen or waggoners	1	6	.	.	2	6	.	.	
Women, fieldwork	1	0	.	.	1	0	very few	.	
Boys	0	6	.	.	6d.	to 9d.	„	.	
Shearing sheep, per head	0	3	.	.	0	3	.	.	
Rat-catching	0	3	.	.	0	1	.	.	
Mole-catching	0	1½	.	.	0	2	.	.	
Hedging, making new ditch, 6 ft. by 4 ft., and planting quick, per rod	1	6	to 1	8	.	4	0	to 5	0
Cleaning ditches	1	0	.	.	0	3	„	1	3
Mowing, making and pitching hay, per acre	4	6	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mowing only, per acre	1	8	.	.	4	0	.	.	
Making and pitching, per diem	?	.	.	.	Ord. wage + 6d.	.	.	.	
Filling and spreading muck, per score	2	9	.	.	2	0	.	.	

	1777-1782			1902
	s.	d.		
Thrashing, putting up, casting, and stacking straw, per coomb	0	7		labour and machine costs, about 10½d.
Thrashing oats	0	7½		
„ „ wheat	1	3		
Tying (? winnowing)	1	8		
Pulling and spreading hemp, pr. rod	0	3		
Spinning hemp, per skein	0	3		
Harvest wages, per mensem		Ord. wages and beer and a 'frolic'—10 lbs. of beef		
		per man	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Mowing wheat, per acre	5	6	6	10 to 8 10
Mowing oats or barley, per acre	1	3	0	12 about
			„	„

The next table shows the gross rental of three farms, two in the neighbourhood of Sibton, one in Linstead. The tithe is deducted from 1902 as accurately as possible.

Gross Rental per acre.

	1805			1824			1902		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Sibton (1)	0	16	6	1	14	9	0	8	9
Sibton (2)	1	1	0	1	18	6	0	11	0
Linstead	0	18	0	1	12	6	0	11	6
Average	0	18	6	1	15	3	0	10	5

Inferences drawn from the Tables.

Rentals from 1777 to 1805 seem to have remained stationary.

Cottage rents appear to be about the same then and now, although probably the houses are better now.

Taking one of the above farms as a specimen, the averages each being about 300 acres—

If we allow six labourers the farmers will now lose by the increased wages about £73.

If we include the high price of wheat in 1782 in the average of the five years, and assume the farm to have grown $\frac{1}{3}$ of its acreage with that cereal, we find a loss to the farmer of £48.

On the other hand he will gain £65 by the rise in price of barley and peas, allowing $\frac{1}{3}$ as for wheat taking the moderate crop of 8 coomhs per acre. The rise in oats will give another £50 gain. Assuming the farm to have carried sheep then as now, a sale of 100 lambs would be a moderate estimate, the proceeds of which would show a gain of £95.

Next we must assume that the farmer will be able to sell twenty 'buds,' or young stock, the price of which has gone up £3 per head, or £60 present gain.

The rent has decreased 8s. per acre, and this not including the tithe then paid by the tenant and now by the landlord, showing a further gain to the farmer of £120.

Summarised the farmer

	gains	loses
	£	£
Labour	—	73
Wheat	—	48
Barley }	65	—
Peas }		
Oats	50	—
Sheep	95	—
Kine	60	—
Rent	120	—
	<u>390</u>	<u>121</u>
Net gain to Farmer	<u>269</u>	

The position of the three men should therefore be as follows:—The labourer gains about £13, the farmer gains about £269, the landlord loses about £120 per annum, assuming the decrease in the price of bread and meat equally to affect all parties.

I find a note in 1782 showing that Mr. Scrivener gave to the village fund £10 10s. to supply the poor with wheat at 20s., showing that the poor did eat wheaten bread and not barley, as is often supposed.

Also another of some interest to the effect that the price of a man-trap was at that date 33s. 6d. !

I have often talked with aged labourers as to their present position and that of fifty years ago; they own that they are much better off now, especially being much more independent. In the old days they were obliged to 'cringe' to their masters for fear of losing their favour, and in consequence their places. This probably

accounts for the habit—by no means extinct—of seldom speaking the truth if there is any advantage to be gained by lying.

The farmers, on the other hand, say that the labourers have higher wages, shorter hours, and do half the work per hour that they formerly did.

My own experience points to the fact that, as a rule, the trouble of keeping the men 'on the land' is due to the following causes in the order given :

1. The dulness and want of recreation for the young people.
2. The supposed advantages of the higher wages in towns.
3. The wretched cottages so often found about here.
4. The injudicious way the farmers treated their men a few years ago: discharging them in the winter, to live or starve, cutting their low wages down on every possible occasion.

Personally I think the trouble is greatly exaggerated; at any rate, although farming at times over 1,000 acres, I have never experienced the least trouble in getting plenty of men.

As a further example of the state of affairs in all this heavy land district of which Halesworth is one of the centres, I may perhaps quote the instance of a farm that I hold within three miles of that town. This farm of 190 odd acres was bought by my late father-in-law, Major Margitson, for £6,000, or, including two cottages which he erected, £6,500 in the year, I believe, 1856. It then had the reputation of being one of the best corn farms in the neighbourhood.

In 1860 it brought in a rent of £263, the tenant paying the tithe. When first I became connected with it, something over twenty years ago, the rent was £200 plus tithe of £35 paid by the tenant, who was, however, £142 in arrear. Subsequently this man fell into difficulties and left, and the farm was relet to another man at a lower rent, who became bankrupt; indeed, although this was concealed, when he took it he was in this condition. In due course he departed, leaving me the loser of a good deal of money and the land in a foul state. It was then again relet, this time for only £50 a year, out of which sum I had to pay nearly £30 tithe. That tenant still continues in occupation, his rent having been raised to £75 a year, while the tithe has sunk to £23 12s. 4d. A

mortgage of about £3,000 which was left upon the place, has been paid off, and repairs have been executed to the value—speaking from memory—of several hundred pounds. The arable is now in good order, and thirty or forty acres of the land have been laid down in grass, which in another ten or a dozen years may become of value.

How much this property has cost to own during the last twenty years I cannot say without research, but it must be something considerable. The interest of the instance lies in the fact that it is a fair sample of what has happened in the case of thousands and tens of thousands of acres of similar land in Suffolk, which, having neither sporting nor residential worth, are of use only for the production of corn and meat that the country can procure more cheaply from abroad. Still it is obvious that a tenant can still make something out of such a holding, otherwise it would not command £75 a year gross, or sell for £10 or so an acre, which is about the price realised by such land in the neighbourhood. It is curious to reflect that this place was once a Hall where probably a freeholder resided in the middle ages and later, who found the land belonging to it sufficient to his maintenance and to that of his family.

I have also two other small farms in the same district where, Arthur Young says, great herds of cows were kept in his day. Of these the story is practically the same. To all intents and purposes they are more expense and trouble than they are worth. Yet the land is of an excellent quality of its sort, capable, with good farming, of producing five quarters of wheat to the acre, and of growing, and, with the aid of some cake, of fattening out beef and mutton, also of producing milk or apples, with other fruits and vegetables which could be railed daily at a main-line station within three miles. Yet there is nobody who will undertake the production of these latter crops, although they are imported annually from abroad to the value of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Of this the principal reason is doubtless that East Anglian farmers do not understand their cultivation, and that of small-

holders who do, or who would learn, there are none forthcoming. Also they fear the present almost prohibitive cost of the transport of stuff that must find its chief market in cities.

I do not think that it is necessary for me to dwell further upon the present condition of the heavy lands in Suffolk, since to do so would only be to repeat the same tale. So far, as I can see, in the absence of a change for the better in the conditions under which they are owned and worked, their destiny is to tumble down to some sort of grass that will be made use of, and tended by an ever-dwindling population. How fast this process is going on may be shown by a single example that I chance to have at hand. In September 1901 the Hoxne District Rural Council passed the following resolution: 'That the urgency of this question' (*i.e.* the neglect of rural teaching in our schools) 'is manifest from the fact of the startling diminution in the population of rural districts generally, amounting, for instance, in this union to a quarter of the population since 1861, namely, 14,694 to 10,220.'

Mr. Robert Johnson, of the Colonial College, Hollesley Bay, Suffolk, in a letter to myself, urging that the yield of wheat per acre should and could be greatly increased, remarks on this question of the depopulation of the Suffolk villages: 'The second great branch of the subject is the social one. The girls run off into the factory life of the towns, and the young men follow them. Herein lies a bigger evil than the non-growing of the wheat; an evil that goes to the very root of our existence as a nation, which is sapping the vitality of our people morally and physically.'

Mr J. Loder, of Woodbridge, suggests to me that this evil might be mitigated by the removal of the London Union poorhouses to the country and the bringing up of their young inmates on the land. My own opinion is that, even if the London authorities would consent to such a scheme, the 'young inmates' of such antecedents would find their way to the towns even more quickly than do the country folk. Also

it may be doubted whether they would in any case add a desirable element to the rural population.

In the foregoing pages I have set out the conditions which I found prevailing in the different agricultural divisions of Suffolk. Speaking generally, it would seem that the owners of land who have no other source of income are practically ruined, unless, indeed, they chance to possess houses and estates which are valuable to let to rich men for purposes of sport. The tenants, although they are better off than the landlords, even at the present small rents, for the most part make a living and no more. The labourers receive a higher wage than in the past, just enough to support themselves and their families in houses that are often insufficient, but have no hope of advancing themselves in life, and, for this reason chiefly, depart into the towns whenever opportunity offers, whence, even if they wish it, they cannot escape again. One poor man, not a labourer, it is true, whom circumstances had driven from Suffolk to London wrote to me the other day :—

The result was migration to the metropolis, the only place apparently where one can, in a case of emergency, find a living, or, as it might more truthfully be termed, a living death, a life lived amongst bricks and mortar, with scarce a square yard of sky, the air poisoned and heavy with germs and gases and smoke and dirt; the noise and bustle tearing one's nerves to pieces; and the longed-for country with its health-giving, beautiful surroundings a thing to read about or see in the shop-windows of picture dealers. . . . I have come into communication with several young men and lads whose parents have, it appears, all come 'up' from the country some years ago. They were attracted to London when young by the large wages, which they find wholly inadequate directly they collect household cares around them. Most of them know that in the country they would be in better health, better in pocket, in conditions of work, in fact in everything, but—and here they come as it were to a blank wall—how, and in what capacity, can they live if they return? . . . To leave certain employment and go to the country to seek for work would mean starvation; and so, like 'dumb driven cattle,' they keep at it, slaving and

toiling and shortening their lives as well as assisting in the degeneration in health and stature of the race of which we in past years have been proud to boast. It seems to me that it is hopeless expecting those who leave the land ever to return—they cannot do so even if they would—therefore every effort should be put forth to retain those who are now living upon the land in the country parishes. How long the depopulation of the land has been going on I do not know—I should say since education was brought so much to the front—and how to stop it is a big question. . . . I can truthfully say I often envy the life of a labourer.

Then my correspondent asks my ‘sympathy and assistance or advice’ to enable him to return to the country. My sympathy is his indeed, but, alas! how can I assist him? If my efforts result in preventing some others from following his example it will be as much as I can expect. But even on this point I am not sanguine, since until they find some reasonable prospect of advancement in the villages, led by a hope that only too often is but a fen-lamp to lure them to their ruin, they will continue to emigrate to the towns.

To return: I can only describe the conditions prevailing in rural Suffolk at the present time as disastrous, or so at least I think them. It must be remembered, however, that the labour question is not so pressing there, or the exodus from the land quite so marked, as is the case in many other counties.

NORFOLK

THE eastern sea-coast county of Norfolk has an area of about 1,308,400 acres, a greatest length of sixty-seven miles and a greatest breadth of nearly forty-three miles. It comprises many varieties of soil, more, according to some authorities, than any other county in England. In the north and west the land is chalky and sandy; in the east and the centre are loams and clays. On the Cambridgeshire border lie great stretches of Fen; in the south-east is a good deal of sandy soil, and where it marches with Lincolnshire alluvial clays and loams are met with.

Norfolk has long been famous for its farming and its four-course cropping shift—wheat, roots, barley, seeds. In very many places, however, this has been varied of late years, the tenant often following whatever system pleases him best, and sometimes, be it added, cross-cropping or ‘stealing’ a crop. It is a dry county, the average rainfall being about twenty-three inches per annum as compared with thirty-six inches for the whole of England. Norfolk has earned an unenviable notoriety on account of the east winds which prevail there in spring and early summer. Undoubtedly these are very cold, but so far as my own experience goes, not colder than those that visit other eastern and northern counties. By way of compensation our autumns are for the most part beautifully fine, and severe weather is not often experienced before Christmas.

Our host in the East Flegg district of Norfolk was Mr. George Beck, J.P., of Ormesby St. Margaret, who, in succession to his father and grandfather, had farmed here for fifty years.

Mr. Beck, who is perhaps the largest farmer in the neigh-

bourhood, owns and hires a total of 1,500 acres. He said he thought that farmers in this part of Norfolk were losing ground every day. Men who held their own three years before had been broken and their places taken by others; he did not know one who was doing well at legitimate farming, but he could recall many who had faded away. They did not go bankrupt, but they vanished, and some of them died broken-hearted.

I asked him why under these circumstances men took farms, to which Mr Beck replied that there still existed an idea that farmers were doing well; also it was supposed to be a respectable business. At any rate if holdings were to let in that district there was a good competition for them, although they did not pay. His two sons were taking to farming. They had been brought up to it and were not fitted to be bookworms; also in that case he owned farms which he hoped they would cultivate, although if he had considered the matter only from a money point of view he would not have consented to their entering on the business. Had he not possessed private means he should have given up farming long before; indeed he had three farms which he would let if he could find good tenants, but these, Mr. Beck added, were 'as scarce as good landlords.' The 'landskinner' was a man to flee from.

Rents and selling values had come down by a half since 1875. Thus one of Mr. Beck's farms which we saw had cost him £70 an acre, but now was not worth more than £35. The whole question was one of prices, and the only remedy that he knew would be a tax of 5s. a quarter on wheat; all the rest were but quack nostrums. With reference to labour he said that the old men wore out and the young ones did not take their places, as education seemed to have unfitted them for work on the land. Also there was much complaint about its quality, as many of the men no longer took any pride in their work. Still in that district they had not really felt the pinch as yet, since there were still enough old men left for their needs.

Mr Wiseman, a resident in the neighbourhood, whom I saw at Mr. Beck's, said that he used to farm 1,000 acres, but then had only 250, which he would give up if it were not for the value and comfort of his house. He did not believe that one farmer in ten was actually solvent. Mr. Wiseman gave me some figures, taken from the accounts of his home-farm of 170 acres in the years 1878 and 1900, which show so clearly how great is the fall in the value of the produce from a given acreage of land in this locality that I print them.

		1878			
Cr.				Dr.	
		£		£	
Stock and Crops	1,245	Rent	450		
		Labour	290		
		Bills &c.	(about) 200		
					<u>£940</u>
Profit £305.					

		1900			
		£		£	
Stock and Crops	668	Rent	205		
		Labour	320		
		Bills &c. (which are higher in proportion than in 1878)	about 200		
					<u>£725</u>
Loss £57.					

Mr. Wiseman added that his profit on each bullock used to be from £8 to £10, but during the previous three years it had not averaged £5 a head, although they had eaten an acre of roots apiece in addition to cake. He said that of labour they had sufficient, but owing to the pace at which the men worked it took ten horses to do what used to be done with eight. The young men, he added, were not going on to the land, from which their parents discouraged them. He could not see where any improvement was to come from or how prices were to be heightened. The only man who had

a chance was he who worked his holding with the help of his family, and of doing this people were apt to get tired

This gentleman, Mr. Beck, and Mr. Kidman, another farmer who was present, gave me instances of man after man who had been ruined in Norfolk farming. Thus one had bought land for £11,000 on which he borrowed £9,000. It was sold for £6,500, his creditors receiving 5s. in the £1. Other good land in Martham, which had been purchased for £55 the acre, sold for £25 the acre. The remedy which Mr. Wiseman favoured was a duty on foreign flour. He thought that with wheat at 40s. a quarter farmers could 'creep along.'

The land in this district is very good, an excellent, mixed sandy loam, with a brick-earth subsoil, which can be worked in wet weather, and is not liable to suffer from drought. Mr. Beck's farms, over which I walked and drove, were, as might be expected, in first-rate order. The present rental value of the best land in this neighbourhood, upon which, by the way, the tithe is very heavy, seems to be about 30s. the acre.

Amongst other occupiers of land Mr. Beck took me to see Mr. Tungate, a fruit grower in Great Ormesby, who told me that the area under fruit was increasing, but that the local markets were overdone. Altogether he seemed rather despondent, and said that there was a difficulty in finding gatherers, and that the price of raspberries had fallen very much. These pickers received 2s. a day and stout to drink, and if the crop were bad it hardly realised enough to pay their wages. He did not believe in apple growing, but said that his brother succeeded with black currants. He had tried potatoes and asparagus, but declared that the labour bill killed that business.

We also visited the farm of a small-holder who owned thirty acres which he had bought out of his savings scraped together by hard work. This industrious man carried on a retail trade in produce at Yarmouth and, I gathered, was fairly successful in his business.

At Winterton, about two miles away, I visited the farm of our host's two sons, Messrs. G. and C. Beck, fine young men

who had returned recently from serving as yeomen in the war. They held 300 acres of upland and 900 acres of foreshore, that is, sand-dunes covered with marum grass (*Psamma arenaria*), only useful for rough grazing and as a preserve for rabbits, which are sold at 10s. a dozen. On many parts of the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts the sea, is encroaching alarmingly, but just here it has retreated, probably for the last century or two, as an elderly man informed me that he could not remember any change in its limits. First there is a steep, fern-clad bank of which doubtless the foot was once washed by the ocean; then comes a valley overgrown with marum measuring about 400 yards in width and bordered with sand-dunes, beyond which lies the present beach.

The Rev. William Green, Rector of Winterton, of which the population is practically amphibious, told me that the prosperity of the fishing industry kept people in the village. As he said that in the season of 1900 even boys earned as much as £40 apiece, this is not strange. I have observed the same thing at Kessingland, in Suffolk, where I own some property, for at bottom the question of retaining people in the country is one of wages or earnings and nothing else. Thus at Kessingland, although it has no railway within four miles, the population is, I believe, actually increasing, and the place is exceedingly prosperous. Yet there it is very difficult to obtain labour except at a high rate of wage, and a boy who is willing to work in a garden can scarcely be found.

Leaving my kind hosts the Becks—one of those charming families, farmers of their own and hired property, who are becoming so rare in rural England—I travelled to Aylsham, where our host was Mr. B. B. Sapwell, of Sankence. About Martham were many small-holdings on which fruit was grown, raspberries seeming to be the principal crop. Between this and Ludham the land is very well farmed. At Potter-Heigham marshlands lie along the banks of the Bure, but after leaving that place the ground rises slightly and the land is arable, pasture being rare. Before Stalham,

to the south of which are some marshlands, is the district of the Broads, around which lie water-meadows. Here the country is flat and fertile and the fences are good. After leaving Stalham we saw big Shorthorn cattle grazing on rich marshes. These were succeeded by poorer land and a stretch of gravel soil in the neighbourhood of Honing. At Fehningham was another bank of gravel sloping down to richer soil. Here there were few trees, and most of those that we saw were oaks severely lopped of their side boughs.

Mr. Sapwell, who, I believe, owns most of the land he farms, said he thought the agricultural position in that neighbourhood bad, and that farmers were very unprosperous, although perhaps a few of them made a little money. On one farm of 332 acres he had not cleared £200 a year for ten years past, and if he possessed no private means could only have lived very roughly like a small farmer. Indeed he would have been better off if he had invested his capital and sat idle. The majority of farmers were doing badly; many went under and many hung on the balance.

Farms, he declared, were taken by men in business or by those to whom money had been left. Farmers were not bringing up their sons to the land, as for £1,000 a man could be put into a profession, whereas to farm he would want £3,000, which he stood a good chance of losing. Nearly all the people who held small official positions in that district were, he informed me, farmers' sons or broken-down farmers.

Land had fallen much in value; a fact of which he gave me many lamentable instances of a sort with which my readers will be familiar. Rents also had fallen, sometimes as much as 50 per cent. Still he advised the buying of the best land in good positions at the present low values, as this could now be done to pay the purchaser five per cent on his outlay. The only hope for the future in his opinion lay in a possible rise of prices. If these sank any further capital must vanish and the ruin of agriculture would certainly follow.

One of the features of Mr. Sapwell's farming was the

breeding of a few really first-class thoroughbred horses. He kept four mares only, as he was convinced that the worst thing a man could do was to crowd his land with thoroughbreds. The result was that his yearlings had a very good reputation. Sometimes they fetched as much as £500 apiece, but on other occasions he was not so lucky. Thus in one year (1898) he made a profit of £1,000, in 1899 one of only £120, and in 1900 £356.

I walked over Mr. Sapwell's two farms, which were, I think, his own property. I understood that he bought 205 acres of this land in 1873 at £50 an acre, that is, for £10,250, spending another £4,000 on the buildings. The present sale value he estimated at about £6,000. Another holding of 140 acres cost £5,500 in 1884, and was now, he considered, worth £2,500. This farm used to let for £220, the farmer paying the tithe. He thought that at the present time it would bring in but £1 an acre from a tenant, the landlord paying the tithe. The soil here was very good, mixed with a sand subsoil. In some dim age most of it was brought to this country by icebergs, and it is therefore rather 'pockety,' marl and gravel showing close together.

Mr. Sapwell's red-brick and tile buildings were excellent, all his bullocks being kept in covered yards. The same may be said of his cottages, which cost about £200 apiece and were let at 1s. a week, the owner paying taxes and repairs. As he pointed out, such rents are 'a bribe' to the men and bring in no return on the outlay.

The thoroughbred breeding mares which we saw first were very fine and larger than the majority of these pedigree animals. Of sheep he had 450, bought in on the Norwich market. Half of these were to be sold out in the following January and half in March. A good deal of his labour was done by 'taking' or piece-work, pulling, topping, and tailing swedes cost him 5s. the acre. His bullocks, which were Irish, were bought in at an average cost of £15 10s. a head, to go out at Christmas weighing sixty stone, at about £24 a head. They received as much roots as they could eat, that is, nearly

three skeps, or 160 lbs. weight a head per diem, with hay, 6 lbs of cake, and meal. In one of his yards stood ten young bulls which he was making into beef as an experiment, having found that such animals, fed singly, paid better than bullocks. Their average cost was £9 7s. 6d. a head, which is considerably less than that of bullocks of the same age; and as they did not eat more than other store cattle, and grew much faster, he expected that he would be able to sell them out in the following spring at £20 apiece. I do not know how the venture succeeded, but personally, I am doubtful whether so many bulls herded together will fat as quickly as they do when yarded separately. He kept a number of turkeys also, as fine birds as any I have seen in Norfolk.

Mr. Sapwell has been so kind as to send to me his balance-sheet on these two farms for the year ending at Michaelmas, 1901, with some added notes, which documents I print below, as I consider them of great interest. It will be seen, without allowing for interest on capital, or return for management, that his net profit on the two places, which, such as it is, must be put to the credit of the thoroughbred yearlings sold, amounts only to £165 9s. 5d. If that is all that can be earned on about 650 acres of very good land by a farmer of Mr. Sapwell's great ability and experience, it would seem that the chance of success for the rest of us in Norfolk is poor indeed. But the figures on the next page speak for themselves.

At Burgh-next-Aylsham, where the soil is loam and sand with a chalk subsoil, Mr. Sapwell took us to see Mr. E. Learner, of the Manor Farm, a very noted Norfolk agriculturist. In all I think Mr. Learner farmed 1,500 acres in different holdings at Burgh, Reedham, Worstead, and North Walsham, of which I believe about 500 were grass. He used, I understood, to farm 2,500 acres, but of these 1,000 had been taken over by his son. Mr. Learner practised the old style of Norfolk farming, buying in and fattening everything and breeding nothing. The stock that he preferred for his purposes were Lincoln Reds and Herefords, which he

Home Farm in Aylsham, 302½ acres; also 21½ acres of Marsh at Berney Arms. Total 324 acres.

	£	s	d		£	s	d
Valuation, Michaelmas, 1900.	3,377	12	0	Wheat sold . . .	399	5	11
Cake, Corn, and Seeds bought . . .	771	4	11	Barley „ . . .	387	1	4
Livestock bought . . .	1,974	0	1	Dairy and Poultry . . .	70	10	5
Manure bought . . .	108	0	10	Miscellaneous sold . . .	78	15	5
Tradesmen's bills . . .	252	1	5	Livestock sold . . .	3,392	10	5
Rent, Tithe, Rates, Taxes, Insurance, &c . . .	416	19	3	Valuation, Michaelmas, 1901 . . .	3,320	18	0
Labour . . .	545	10	5				
Profit . . .	203	12	7				
	<u>£7,649</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>		<u>£7,649</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>

Note.—Built during the year a washhouse on my off premises and made structural alterations, costing together about £40 Yearlings sold for £575 18s 6d. (net, after Taltersall's charges deducted) less stud fees and expenses, £246), leaving profit on them of about £330. Deducting from this cost of keep of thoroughbred stock, the account would about balance, leaving no interest on capital or return for management

Docking Farm, Causton, adjoining the above (in all 332½ acres, and 20 acres of ground in Dalling; in all 352½ acres).

	£	s	d		£	s	d
Valuation, Michaelmas, 1900.	3,008	0	5	Wheat sold . . .	372	6	5
Cake, Corn, and Seeds bought . . .	736	14	1	Barley „ . . .	266	1	0
Livestock bought . . .	1,323	7	7	Oats „ . . .	77	0	0
Manure bought . . .	125	0	0	Poultry . . .	53	6	2
Tradesmen's bills . . .	145	9	3	Miscellaneous sold . . .	254	16	9
Rent, Rates, Taxes, Insurance, &c . . .	231	12	8	Livestock sold . . .	2,123	0	3
Labour . . .	553	5	3	Valuation, Michaelmas, 1901 . . .	2,938	15	6
	<u>£6,123</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>	Loss . . .	38	3	2
					<u>£6,123</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>

Note.—The loss of £38 is in addition to loss of interest on capital, and there is nothing for management

Note the ridiculously small amount realised for the corn grown.

purchased in large numbers. Thus not long before I met him he had purchased ninety-eight bullocks at £20 apiece, which were brought from Radnorshire to Norfolk in a special train. Mr. Learner said that farmers had been very hard hit during the past few years, having little that they could turn into money. In the old days corn paid the wages and the root crop the landlord, but things were changed. How many of the farmers existed was a mystery to him, and that there should still be a demand for farms was another. This was partially explained, however, by the fact that there were only three people in the North Walsham district whom he called legitimate farmers. Nearly all the landholders there had a trade which they combined with their farming.

I may mention that out of three tenants whom I have near that town one is a builder as well as a farmer, and another, I believe, does or did a good deal of carting; a fact which goes to bear out Mr. Learner's statement. People, he remarked, would do better if they invested their money instead of putting it into farming, and save themselves much labour and anxiety as well. He quoted a local case of a man who had farmed all his life—largely, I think—whose estate when he died, not long before, was found to be but just sufficient to pay his debts and leave £500 or less surplus to his widow.

Rents in that neighbourhood, which used to be £2 an acre and the tithe, were, Mr. Learner said, about £1 an acre minus the tithe, and selling values had sunk in proportion. £25 an acre was now a large price for land that used to cost £50 or £60 the acre. At North Walsham he had a farm which he could have sold in the past at the latter figure, but at in 1901 would not fetch £30 the acre. Farmers only wanted one thing, and that was a better price for their produce. He thought that the season of 1901 would be more favourable for grazing—by which he meant the fattening out of bullocks—than that of 1900, which was about the worst he ever experienced, as in it the root crop did not work out, after paying for cake bills, &c. at more than a net value of £1 an acre to him. The reason of this was that in 1901,

taking the district through, there was not more than half a crop of roots, which if I followed him aright, is much better for the large graziers than a year when there is a full crop. This sounds very paradoxical, but it is explained by the fact that when roots are plentiful the stores to eat them are dear. Also so much finished beef is lumped on to the market all at once that its price falls to an unprofitable level. At any rate Mr Learner stated that three good root crops in succession were enough to ruin a Norfolk farmer who fattened out beasts.

Owing to local causes, and chiefly to lack of employment on the railways, labour was, he said, more plentiful in that district than it had been, also they were fairly off for cottages. The lads, however, drifted away from the land, and the labour obtainable was of a different quality from what it used to be, while as it deteriorated its cost rose. The young fellows would not work as their fathers did. The wages at that time were 12s. a week and harvest money. At such a figure, I may remark, certainly it is not wonderful that young men are unwilling to come on to the land, where they have no prospects, where indeed year by year their capital, which is their bodily strength, gradually wastes away.

Mr. Learner described the characteristics of north and east Norfolk farming, the light land being of course excepted, as 'corn-growing and winter-grazing.' Generally the four-course shift was still followed, with now and again the addition of another white crop for which the land was manured. Mr. Learner has the reputation of being one of the best judges of cattle in Norfolk. Certainly it was justified by the beasts which we saw feeding in his stalls and yards in mid-October, 1901. They were splendid animals, and being all aged bullocks, capable of making heavy beef, received as much food as they could swallow, Russian linseed mixed with cotton cake, malt combings, roots, &c. The beasts that were bought in during February and March were put out to grass on May 12, while those

for winter grazing were purchased in August or September to go out at Christmas or later.

In the drought of 1901 the temporary grasses and trefoils had not done well in this district, and Mr Learner had found it necessary to mend some of his fields with additional seed. His sheep, of which we saw some 600, were an exceedingly fine lot, for the most part Oxford Downs crossed with Black-face or Leicesters. They were bought in at an average price of 35s. 6d. in the late summer, and were expected to go out at about 50s. at the end of November. Up to the time I saw them they had received one pound of cake a day per head, and thenceforward were to be trough-fed with ground, that is pulped, roots, to which they had become accustomed by having white turnips and swedes thrown to them on the olands. In one of his off yards we inspected a very fine lot of Lincoln Red cattle bought in at a price of £16 15s. a head early in the summer, when they were two years of age. These were to go out in the following January.

The steam cultivation on this holding, which was very highly farmed throughout, cost 10s. an acre in addition to the price of coal, of which 2 cwt. were consumed per acre. I did not ask what was the capital employed, but it must have been very heavy. That so energetic and able an agriculturist as Mr Learner, who had also the advantage of being his own dealer, could give no better report of the condition and prospects of the local husbandry struck me as significant.

The agent of a large, light-land estate which I visited in this neighbourhood informed me that there barley and sheep were chiefly relied on, although they had a few first-rate mixed-soil farms. Rents averaged from 15s. to 16s., and some of the tenants were asking for further reductions on the light lands. With care he thought that the best soil paid its way. He could not see anything which led him to hope for better things in the future. They were not pinched for labour, but he said that its quality was bad and the youths went away. When he came to that property six of

the woodmen were skilled workers in the prime of life, but they were departing and he found difficulty in replacing them. He mentioned that in the village of Swannington the labour question was very acute; indeed there were not sufficient men to keep the horses at work. The cause of this he believed to be the inferior nature of the houses and the dearth of their rents. I may mention that in driving through the villages in this district I saw many cottages which struck me as very bad.

The wages were 12s. a week, with harvest money for ordinary labourers; but the horse-men received 14s. 6d. and the cowmen 15s. and a house. Although wages had fallen 1s. since the previous harvest, labour was somewhat more plentiful than it had been in 1900, when there was difficulty owing to the shortage and the temper of the men. As they suited the light land better than Shorthorns, Red Polls were bred upon this property, where many fowls were also kept, chiefly of the Plymouth Rock and Buff Orpington breeds. Owing to the scarcity of feed on that light land, they had just been obliged to sell out the lambs, which had been fetching 34s. in mid-summer, at the low price of 29s. a head.

At Honing Hall, four miles south of North Walsham, in the north-east corner of Norfolk, I saw Mr. E. G. Cubitt, who is lord of the manor and principal landowner in the parish. Mr. Cubitt, who was also Chairman of the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture and of Lawes' Chemical Manure Company, in addition to the management of his own property was connected with that of nine others in different parts of Norfolk. It is obvious, therefore, that there can be few gentlemen more experienced or better competent to express opinions upon all matters connected with the land and husbandry of the county.

Mr. Cubitt, who has held his property since 1881, said that he had 'saved the place' by resisting the common tendency to concentrate the small-holdings into big farms. His policy was to keep a good large tenant if possible, but

to let small men have small bits of land, to foster village industries, and to encourage the little tradesmen to take small-holdings. To such holdings the Honing and Ridlington land is very well suited, being of good, rich, mixed soil, with a clay and sand subsoil and occasional sand-hills. It is, I believe, considered some of the best in Norfolk, and in good times land in the district used to command, including the tithe, as much as £3 10s. an acre rent.

Mr. Cubitt drove us to see some of the holdings. Holding A was a 100-acre farm let at 25s. an acre rent. This size of tenancy Mr. Cubitt, whose largest farm, by the way, extended to 320 acres, thought was going out of fashion, his opinion being that the farmers who would survive in the future must be the big man with capital, or the small man whose capital consisted of his own and his family's labour. Next we saw seven acres of land that had been planted with fruit at a cost of £300, I understood, as a private venture of Mr. Cubitt's. The fruit, which was in its third year, had returned £60 from sales that season, in which were included two tons of apples, that sold at 2s. the stone. This left a profit on the enterprise, although of course the trees were not in full bearing.

Holding B was a small place which had been planted with fruit by a man who evidently was not suited to the occupation. At any rate he was said to have lost £200 and to be giving up his lease.

Holding C of six acres was held by a tenant who did well. Here apples succeeded excellently, and there was no black currant mite.

Holdings D, E, and F were of sixty, thirty, and twenty-six acres respectively. These all adjoined the Honing Common of 108 acres, one of the few that escaped the Enclosure Acts, which I suppose did more than anything else to kill out the English peasant-farmer.

Holding G was a farm of 270 acres let at 27s. the acre and subject to a tithe of 5s. the acre. Of grass on all these places I saw but little; indeed there were not 100 acres of it

out of the 1,400 which the parish contains. This land is very suitable to fruit growing, which perhaps would be more largely practised in the district were it not for the fear of owners lest they might find themselves liable for large sums under the provisions of the Market Gardeners' Compensation Act of 1895.

Other objects of interest that we saw in Honing were the chapel built by Mr. Cubitt and rented to a dissenting body, a nursery garden for the growth of stock to be planted out in fruit orchards, and some woods, dating from the year 1728, which were managed on the German principle. Breadths of these plantations are cut down periodically and re-set with ash, oak, sweet chestnut, larch, and firs. Thus, not long before my visit seven acres had been felled and the timber on them sold for £200 the acre. Mr. Cubitt informed me that in this district there was no demand for small owner-ships, but small occupations were in great request, as distinct from allotments, which were not wanted. In speaking of the advantages of such occupations, he pointed out, with much truth, that until the land came into a great many more hands it would be almost impossible to pass laws framed for its benefit. At present the idea was prevalent, and therefore reflected in the Legislature, that to do anything to help the land would be to help the owners of large estates, against whom the mass of the population was prejudiced. He added that the big farmers did not like small-holders because the latter paid higher rents, and thereby, the farmers thought, set a bad precedent, and that the land agents did not like them because they gave them more trouble than did the hirers of large occupations.

In the course of my articles I made a remark, which could be interpreted in a somewhat similar sense, that drew from a member of an East Anglian firm holding a good many land agencies a letter disputing the statement. He said that they had to do with a number of small-holders, almost all of whom paid up so well and punctually that on this account alone they would welcome more of them. Indeed

he did not know any agent who objected to the extension of small-holdings on account of the extra trouble of collecting their rents. He thought, however, that the chief difficulties or prejudices which weighed in the minds of many against the establishment of such holdings were—

(1) The expense of the provision and repair of the necessary buildings

(2) The interference, or supposed interference, with shooting rights which they involved

(3) A certain mistrust or tendency against the co-operation that they were believed to foster.

In these remarks there is much truth; still, it is a fact, taking England through, that a good many land agents are to be found who look with no favour upon small-holdings, or on any scheme calculated to increase their number.

Speaking of the unjust burden of the rates and taxes heaped upon agricultural land, Mr. Cubitt pointed out that it has no value *per se*; therefore these are levied upon the capital invested in it in the shape of buildings, improvements, &c., and not on the soil-itself. He thought that in this district farmers were making a living at present rents, at which holdings let freely, though the demand was not so great as it had been. The trouble was that now-a-days the margin of profit, which twenty years before used to be available to meet a bad season or any other misfortune, had vanished. Mr. Cubitt complained of landlords that they would not combine, and that a number of them did not know their business or look after their properties as they should do. Labour had been scarce; indeed for two years the farmers were driven almost frantic because of the lack of it; but just then there was plenty which had returned from the railways. In that district their labour supply was governed by the amount of work attainable on the railway and in the coal and iron trades. Skilled hands, however, were rare, and the young men were going away. The wages averaged 12s. a week in winter and 13s. in summer with harvest, but

mén could earn 15s. or 16s. at 'taking' work, and teamsmen received from 17s. to 18s.

The average rents in the neighbourhood where the land is excellent, varied from 25s. to 28s. the acre, but in other places with which he was connected they were much less. Thus about Attlebridge, where the soil was sandy, they ran from 10s. to 12s. the acre, and near Hockering, some miles east of Dereham, where the land was stiff, from 14s. to 18s. In the Stalham district, which was good mixed land, they reached 30s. and over; and near Reedham, by Yarmouth, the marshes, on which summer grazing was followed, brought in from 28s. to 40s. Here, as I understood, the marsh rates of about 4s. the acre and other charges are paid by the landlord. In the Thetford district, where was much poor, heathy country, many of the tenants were giving up, and the land, in some instances, was being made use of for the training of racehorses.

The annual cost of buildings and upkeep on those Norfolk estates with which he was acquainted Mr. Cubitt put at from 17 to 20 per cent. of the rental. For the future he could not see much hope. He used to be of opinion that either agriculture must break up altogether or experience a return of prosperity, but now he thought that they would just rub along and no more. He added he considered that Government should afford facilities for the borrowing of money at low rates, in order to enable owners to erect buildings and cottages, and thus to establish more small-holdings.

At Holkham we were kindly entertained by the Earl of Leicester, K.G., Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, and like his father, the first Earl before him, its most famous agriculturist, who owns, I believe, about 45,000 acres of land in Norfolk, 20,000 of which lie in a block near Holkham and the rest in scattered properties. Lord Leicester explained to me his famous system of laying down poor lands to grass that is used as sheep-walks for a period of years, sometimes as many as sixteen or twenty, after which, when it



THE EARL OF LEICESTER, K.G.
(Taken at Holkham, November, 1901)

goes to moss, it is broken up in fifty-acre lots, and four crops are taken without manure. The mixture used, which costs £1 an acre, consists of cocksfoot, kidney-vetch, hard fescue, yarrow, Italian and ordinary rye-grass, the cocksfoot predominating. I append a full list of the grasses used and of their exact proportions per acre sown.

Small Seeds for Temporary Pastures at Holkham.

	lb.
Cocksfoot	7
Meadow Fescue	5
Italian Rye Grass	3
Perennial do.	6
Timothy or Catstail	3
Alsiko Clover	1
Perennial Red Clover	1
White Clover	1
Lucerne	1
Kidney Vetch	1
Yarrow	$\frac{1}{2}$
Total	<u>29$\frac{1}{2}$</u>

Cost 25s. 6d.

When the course of such a pasture is run—which is generally in fifteen or sixteen years—it is broken in February and pulled about in March, that is, cross-ploughed and harrowed, to clean it. During July, after the ground has been well rolled, it is sown with mustard to kill the twitch, and the ewes and rams are put on it in September. Next year a crop of barley is taken, then come turnips, then barley again, with which are sown the grass seeds. These seeds are mown for the first and last time in the following summer, after which lambs, that like fresh ground, are turned on them. The layer thus re-established continues its course for another fifteen years or so, to be again broken up in due time. The advantage of this system is that the grass roots draw the nitrogen into the hungry soil, with the result, Lord Leicester said, that he gets 'better crops of barley off the poor land thus broken up than I do off the better

inocked land.' It was, he added, necessary to success that such pastures should not be fed off bare with sheep during the first few years of their existence. In a letter to Mr. Clare Sewell Read as to my proposed visit to Holkham, which he has kindly forwarded to me, Lord Leicester writes as follows on the subject of these pastures and their advantages.—

Holkham. October 7, 1901

. . . I think a useful crop of white turnips may be grown without any expenditure in manure, or in hand labour, and a considerable sum of money saved in the process. I see you doubt the possibility of obtaining a pasture on our hungry gravels. I have a pasture on such a soil that has been down for sixteen years, and my bailiff begs that it may not be broken up, as it produces a lot of feed. Suitable seeds should be sown, but everything depends upon the *after* treatment. You are perfectly right in condemning Mr. —'s system of feeding the first year. Young grass should be treated as you describe—mown the first year, and the eddish stocked lightly with lambs. I have from time to time provided proper seeds for some of my tenants, but I believe in every case the result of laying down land to grass has been a failure. I have never failed in making a good sheep-walk after a very trying season for small seeds, on land which in these times is not worth more than 5s. or 6s. per acre. It is madness to grow corn at present prices; surely it would be better to give the grasses every chance, and not let the sheep eat the roots into the ground, and so ruin the possibility of obtaining a good pasture. My system of temporary pastures is to throw the light lands out of cultivation for as long as it pleases you; if not productive of much gain, it entails no more loss beyond the rent. It might entail in the first instance the purchase of a ewe flock, but if sheep cannot be made to pay, nothing else will on such lands. I find that my barley crop this year was much heavier off the land that was laid down to temporary pasture than on land farmed under the four-course system, with sheep eating a pound of cake on turnips. So much for Mr. —'s persistent statement that lands under pasture diminish in fertility. My experience is that they increase the longer they are under grass. I have no doubt the pastures will look bare after the rooks and starlings have hunted for the grub of the daddy long-legs; but the birds do less harm than the grub; the grasses will come again.

Lord Leicester informed me that in 1901 the demand for his farms was greater than had ever been the case during his long tenure of the estate; therefore the farmers must be living. The tendency among them was to gather farm to farm and work the land with labour-saving appliances. He believed that those men who practised this sort of husbandry were getting 10 or 15 per cent. on their capital, but the people who were farming poor land on the four-course system went to the bad, as it could not be worked at a profit. He did not think that the small farmers on his estate were doing any good for themselves, or that small-holders could flourish in that neighbourhood without a cow pasture. It was the owner of land who suffered; farmers had accommodated themselves to the present prices, but the landlords had to keep up the buildings on half the former rents, although it was true that the sporting value helped them.

Lord Leicester thought the low price of wool a worse blow than the low price of corn, and the abolition of the malt tax, the only form of Protection left to them, a very great mistake. As regarded labour, Lord Leicester said he did not think that the young men were leaving very much. All his cottages were let, and he was building several every year. He had thirty miles of drives to keep up on his estate, and were it not for the needs of all this ornamental work, combined with his system of temporary pastures, he would not be able to employ the number of hands that he did thirty years before. He did not believe that the labourers cared much about allotments.

On this labour question, however, Mr. Wood, Lord Leicester's agent, informed me that the supply was short and that the young men went away.

On the following day Lord Leicester drove us to the Wells Sand-hills by the sea, to show me the pines that he has planted upon them. These pines, besides greatly beautifying the country side, serve to protect it from the inroads of the ocean, and the example that Lord Leicester has set might

be followed with great advantage on miles of our Norfolk coast-line. That when once established they will multiply themselves from seed, is evident from the fact that I saw many self-sown trees growing beneath their parents and on the adjacent marshes, whither they must have been carried by birds. Mr. Clare Sewell Read suggested that these woods might be cheaply and effectively extended by planting fresh fir cones among the rough grass; a plan that Lord Leicester thought quite feasible, and announced his intention of adopting.

Driving through the great park which in all, I believe, covers more than 3,000 acres, we passed down what is, I suppose, the most beautiful avenue of *Ilex* in England. Nowhere have I seen the sombre and impressive *Ilex* tree flourish as it does at Holkham. Multitudes of wood pigeons collect to feed upon its acorns, of which they are ravenously fond; and very fine sport may be obtained by standing in a hidden spot and shooting them as they sweep to and from their feeding ground. A common bag is from fifty to seventy pigeons in four or five hours, that is, if the sportsman knows how to handle his gun; for these pigeons are, I consider, more difficult to kill than any rocketing pheasant.

Beyond the park we came to the marshes, of which over 300 acres were reclaimed from the sea in the year 1660, and 400 more by the first Earl of Leicester in 1822, to which total the present Earl added another 700 acres about half a century ago, at a cost in all of some £40,000. Their present average rental value is about 40s. the acre, and Lord Leicester said that, although the undertaking had interested him, it was not profitable. First, he levelled in all the creeks, after which the reclaimed land was put under the plough, when it produced fifteen or sixteen coomb of wheat to the acre. Afterwards it was laid down to grass, in which it remains. On these marshes I saw many wild geese feeding, while other flocks of them travelled the air overhead, uttering as they went their solemn and peculiar cry.

At length we came to the sea wall which is built of sand

and coated with clay. From its crest the view is very striking. On one side was the whispering forest of pines. Behind us lay the stretch of rich green marshes, and in front the channel of Wells Harbour, wandering through miles of sands down to the distant sea, and bordered by dunes protected with rows of faggots, set there to gather up the wind-driven sand.

Leaving the sea wall we entered the pine woods whereof there were some 300 acres. These consisted of *Laricio* or the Corsican pine, of which the drooping lower branches cover a large space of ground around each tree; *Pinus Austriaca*, or the black Austrian pine, which, as they stand the wind best, were set on the outer fringe; *Pinus Maritima*, or pinaster and Scotch fir planted on the flats within. All of these trees were set in sand and shingle, but it was curious to observe how their presence is inducing the formation of soil. First lichens appear beneath them, then come ferns, marum grass, St. John's-wort and other plants. Nearly every species seemed to be seed^{ing} itself freely, at least I saw many self-planted young trees. I suggested to Lord Leicester that fire might cause great damage among so much resinous wood. He replied that in order to guard against this danger as much as possible, he had divided up the younger plantations into blocks with spaces between them, especially where the marum grew freely.

After walking through these interesting pine woods, which are, I believe, unique in England, at any rate in such a situation, we drove to Holkham village, whereof the wide street is planted on either side with ilex trees. The cottages here are well built and set back, each of them, in a pretty garden. Entering the park again we saw 300 acres of land covered with fine trees. Once this was a wood, but it had been stubbed, only the timber trees being left. Lord Leicester informed me that for sixty years he had marked with his own hand every tree which was thinned out. Here we saw many of the temporary pastures which I have already described, growing on the hungry gravel soil and in every stage of their

development and decadence. Thus one had been down two years which, before its four-year break for cultivation, had endured for twenty years; and another, of which the life was almost finished, for sixteen years. A third was five years old and had reached that stage when it would bear heavy feeding.

Having inspected these layers we visited a farm that was worked on the four-course shift, where the buildings were very fine, with large covered yards in which the stock are sheltered. Here I saw a wide stretch of turnips grown on one of these broken-up pastures. These turnips on the poor land never cost anything for manual labour, but are worked with a horse-hoe only which travels down and across the rows. Thus a man whom we saw tending the sheep, without assistance, except, I suppose, that of a boy to lead his horse, had drilled, horse-hoed and cross-hoed the whole of this sixty acres of white turnips. These were, I noticed, extraordinarily clean, of good growth, and free from weeds.

This visit to the wonderful Holkham estate was one of my most interesting experiences in the course of all my long journeyings through England. It showed me how much the intelligence of a single man can do towards conquering the stubborn strength of Nature. Here the sea is kept in bounds by pines which its barren sands are forced to bear. Poor soils also that many would allow to go to waste, are used for the production of grasses which support hundreds of sheep, whereof the manure in its turn proves sufficient to the growth of excellent crops of barley and of roots.

Could not these things be done in other places where the conditions are similar? Without doubt they could, without doubt there are tens of thousands of acres of land in East Anglia alone which might be similarly treated. But I have not heard that this is the case. Here, indeed, the appalling obstinacy of the British farmer comes into the question. What is strange to him, what his fathers have not done, that he will not do. In Hertfordshire Mr. Prout has shown husbandmen how year by year excellent crops of cereals may be pro-

duced upon the heaviest land at low cost, by the use of cheap chemical manures of the sorts and in the quantities that any agricultural analyst can prescribe. Yet, as I have pointed out, no one avails himself of this discovery. On the hungry soils of Holkham Lord Leicester has taught us how by an artful use of temporary pastures such lands can be turned to profit with little labour and small expense. Yet no one follows his example. Certainly one of the most depressing circumstances in the story of British husbandry is the unwillingness of those who practise it, to avail themselves of the fruits of the experience, energy, and wisdom of men who have solved one of its problems and indicated some new road to success.

At Egmere, two miles west of Walsingham, where the soil is a good loam, I visited the 1,100-acre farm of Mr. Keith, one of Lord Leicester's tenants, who came from Aberdeenshire about fifteen years ago. This holding was in a very high state of cultivation and worked with great economy and intelligence; thus on it, if I remember right, even the fences were clipped with a machine. Mr. Keith, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Orwell in Suffolk also, where he farmed about 2,000 acres, told me that in this part of Norfolk large farms were the rule, some of them covering as much as 2,000 acres. This indeed is the case on most of Lord Leicester's estate. For these farms there was a good demand, although he did not think that many farmers were doing very well. He was of opinion that even in this district there was room for the big man and the small man, but that the 200-acre tenant who did not work with his own hands would fail. He held that in order to be in as good a position as the ordinary farm labourer who earned £50 a year, the small-holder should have £500 capital of his own and fifty acres of land; a remark which was meant to apply of course to this particular division of Norfolk.

Mr. Keith informed me that the young men went away, but that on his farm there were plenty of old people, so that with the help of machinery, they had ample hands to do the

work. He had nineteen cottages on his holding, and the wages were 13s. for labourers and 15s. for horsemen. He relied chiefly on sheep, barley, and bullocks, and followed a four-course shift of wheat, turnips, barley and seeds. The sheep, which were Blackface crossed with Leicester and again crossed with Oxford Down, he bred, and the cattle, Shorthorns and Cumberlands, he bought. Mr. Keith considered that the country round about Walsingham was a fine one for farming.

To this town or village of Little Walsingham I went on, leaving Mr. Keith. It is a quaint old place, with narrow streets bordered by ancient, half-timbered houses. Here I visited the famous shrine, of which now only a few broken arches and the Wishing Wells remain in the beautiful grounds of Mr. Lee-Warner. The contrast between their deserted silence, as I saw them at the fall of a dull, November night, and the sight that they must have presented when thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the earth crowded through their ancient gateway, and kings walked barefoot up their aisles to pay humble homage to our Lady of Walsingham, was one which struck my imagination.

Our host in the King's Lynn district was Mr. Edward Bagge, of Gaywood Hall, the owner of some 2,000 acres of land in that neighbourhood. Mr. Bagge said that the agricultural position was very bad. The owners of land could not live out of their properties unless they had other resources. Rents had fallen enormously. Thus at Mintlyn, which belonged to him, in 1879 a farm of 300 acres let for £650, exclusive of the cottage rents; and another of 400 acres for £600. In 1901 the rent of No. 1 was £280 and of No. 2 £150, in both cases inclusive of the income from the cottages. No. 1 farm was the best he had—a good working soil with 50 per cent. of pasture. No. 2 was light in parts with 240 acres of stiff soiled, rushy grass land.

At Bawsey, adjoining Gaywood, the position was as bad or worse, and two farms that he knew there showed almost as great a fall. He farmed 400 acres himself, and from

Michaelmas to Michaelmas had lost as much¹ as £800, the rent charged being £240. This loss, however, was exceptionally heavy. I asked how, under these circumstances, landlords managed to carry on in that neighbourhood. Mr. Bagge replied, 'They don't carry on; they let the sporting rights and live in the housekeeper's room!' Except in the case of those who possessed extraneous resources, they could not exist; certainly he would be unable to do so. The farmers made a bare living and were scarcely up to the mark, while the main object of the labourers, who generally refused to take piecework, seemed to be to get through the day. They would not work as they used to do. Apparently, in the Lynn district, if the view of them taken by Mr. Bagge and many other informants is correct, the labourer has thoroughly laid to heart the old Norfolk workman's saw—

Go day, come day,
God send Sunday.

In the Fens which lie towards the Lincolnshire border and the Marshlands between Lynn and Wisbech, which are really rich alluvial deposit, where 200 acres is a big farm, matters were, Mr Bagge said, somewhat better, especially on the Skirt lands, which are rich. On the large farms there rents had fallen 50 per cent., but the small ones kept up their value much better. Here the little holder, the man who worked himself, had an advantage, and generally the Fen farmers were saving and thrifty people, quite different from those of the uplands. All classes did better on the Marshlands, where farms let at 30s. the acre, and the labour was more reliable than in the neighbourhood of Lynn.

In the Wisbech and Walpole districts the land was good, and fruit did well; indeed a quantity of the Marshlands was going into fruit. The course there was clean fallow, oats, wheat, and sometimes mustard—which was ploughed in for wheat. A few mangolds were grown, but no turnips, and sheep were kept in summer. In a good year twenty coomb of oats could be raised to the acre. Also the

landlord's outlay was much smaller on a Marsh estate than on other lands where there are so many fences, buildings, and gates. Still the selling value of such land had, at any rate in instances with which he was acquainted, fallen nearly 50 per cent.

Mr. Bagge told me a very amusing story of an ex-tenant of his own which seems to show that all that race are not devoid of guile. This tenant, after sundry similar interviews which had ended to his advantage, arrived and asked that his rent might be yet further reduced. Mr. Bagge asked, 'How about the arrears?' To this the tenant answered that when a man had nothing wherewith to pay it was useless even to mention them. Mr. Bagge replied that unless the arrears were paid up he could not reduce the rent, whereupon the tenant handed him a notice to quit which he had ready in his pocket. Mr. Bagge accepted it and that tenant departed. In course of time the farm was advertised and relet, and the landlord was duly abused as a very hard-hearted man. (*Sequel.*—The tenant having paid up his rent and all arrears at once took another farm of *double the size* of that which he had left because, as he declared, he could not discharge the said arrears.)

Mr. Walter Dodd, of Gayton Hall Farm, Gayton, which lies about seven miles to the east of Lynn, whom I saw at Gaywood, was a guardian, district Councillor, and member of the Assessment Committee of the Freebridge Lynn Union, and farmed 510 acres, of which 110 were grass. None of this grass was mown, the custom being to feed it all. The arable was farmed on the Norfolk four-course system, that is to say, half of it was under corn, one-fourth under roots, and one-fourth under seeds, of which half were fed and half were cut once. The soil was light, 200 acres of it being on the chalk, and so hungry that manure put on it was quite exhausted in two years. If pasture were laid down there, in three or four years the roots would come away from the bottom, so that they could be pulled out with the hand. The rent of Mr. Dodd's farm was, I understood, £270, and the labour on it

came to the high figure of £2 the acre, £1,045 being the actual total. Ten years before, when the farm was much more profitable, it stood at £890. The scale of wages was as follows.

	Yardman			Horse-keeper			Labourer		
	£	s	d.	£	s	d.	£	s	d.
Total for year	47	7	6	45	12	4	38	0	6
Average per week	18	0½		17	6		14	7	

Mr Dodd complained a good deal of the quality of the labour and said that the men now asked for bank holidays and stopped at three on Saturdays. When the old people died out he did not know what would happen, as the young ones went away, only the worst of them stopping on the land. In 1900, owing to the scarcity of labour, the men were paid anything they asked for, but in 1901 it was not so tight. The cottages were numerous but old, folk would not go into them, as they were not up-to-date, and often the owners could not afford to rebuild them. At East Winch he said that some of the houses were wretched; but that parish was in a poor way, and had much dirty, badly farmed land in the hands of a number of small people. Still they had labour there—as much as they could pay for.

From his experience as a guardian, Mr Dodd knew that rents in the Freebridge Union had fallen more than fifty per cent. from the level of the good days. Thus, to take a single example, a farm of 800 acres which was let at £800 a year, the tenant paying tithe, now brought in £340 a year, the owner paying tithe. Still there had been a good demand for farms during the past two or three years at the prevailing low rents, but many of them were being much let down, and he thought that soon there would be a difficulty in reletting them. The selling values of land had fallen even more. Thus an estate in Gayton of 1,600 acres with house, cottages, &c. was purchased in 1875 for £50,000, a sum on which a neighbouring gentleman subsequently offered to advance by £2,000 and take over the property. Since that time £10,000 had been spent on improvements. At Michaelmas 1901 the owner of an adjoining estate offered

the sum of £2,000 for the property, which he considered to be its present full value.

Mr. Dodd said that at the end of 1900 the land seemed to be looking up a little, but a year later, owing to the dry summer of 1901, things were worse than they had ever been. There was but half a corn crop, and when this was thrashed and sold the tenant farmer would be in a poorer plight than he ever was before. What, I wonder, will be his position, not only at Gayton, but throughout Norfolk and England, after this wet harvest of 1902, that is, should the bad weather continue? This day on which I write (September 3), after another night of soaking rain, I have visited my own and other fields, of which the crops ought now to be beneath their thatch.

There they lie, the barley, so much of it as is cut, looking as though it had been steeped, with the layer growing through it; the peas, stinking heaps of straw, their white grain scattered from the burst pods, thrusting out rootlets into the steaming earth; the stooks of wheat tumbled by the gale showing blackish brown instead of golden yellow. But why prolong the melancholy list? In the absence of some providential change it would seem that in 1902 heavy loss stares thousands of farmers in the face, which of course would mean loss to the landlords also, the first persons whom tenants in trouble neglect to pay. At best the corn which promised so well must be much damaged and its ingathering prolonged and costly.¹

To return. Mr Dodd expressed the opinion that the farmer who lived hard, did the work of two men, and made sixpence go as far as a shilling could still exist. The old-fashioned sort, however, could not stand the strain and were going out. Still he thought that the landowner was even harder hit than the tenant.

¹ The fear expressed above seems to have been fulfilled. At any rate, in its Agricultural Report of September 22 the *Times* declares the harvest of 1902 to have been 'the most protracted, troublesome, and expensive of recent years.' In Scotland I read also that now, in mid-October, it is not as yet completed. Still in some districts the crops, though discoloured, are better than were hoped for, also there is much more 'bulk' than was the case in 1901. This advantage however, is largely counterbalanced by the miserable price of wheat, which now stands at little more than 25s. a quarter.

Mr. Dodd relied chiefly upon sheep and barley, keeping fourteen score of Blackface and Cotswold ewes. The hoggetts he fattened; they went out at thirteen months old for as much as 52s. and 55s., although in 1900 they only fetched 42s. He reared also from twenty to twenty-five calves and sold them out fat at two and a half years of age. His barley, which, as the shift was on good land, had been a fair sample, he had sold for 15s. 6d. a coomb. Mr. Dodd kindly gave me the returns of the rateable value of the Freebridge Lynn Union in 1881 and twenty years after. They were. 1881, rate 1s., rateable value £94,000. 1901, rate 1s. 8d., rateable value £51,900. What a story do these figures tell!

At King's Lynn I had an interview with Mr. Richard Allen, of The Chestnuts, Wiggshall St Germans, in the Wisbech district in the Marshland. Mr. Allen said that for fifteen years he was a corn farmer, and in this business had lost nearly all he possessed. Seven years before, however, he began to grow fruit, and was increasing his area every season. Thus in 1901 he had planted from 2,000 to 3,000 bush apples. The result was a considerable change in his position. He farmed 200 acres, of which 100 were his own property. Of this area fifty or sixty acres were under fruit and the remainder cultivated in the usual way. Of strawberries, that stood five years and had fruit trees planted among them, he grew forty acres which never returned less than £20 the acre. His labour-bill came to £700 a year, and where fruit was grown largely, pickers had to be brought from London and housed in shanties. Apples did well on that nice, mixed soil with its substratum of cool clay, and there was a great demand for the best sorts.

Mr Allen said that all round Wisbech the land was an orchard, and market gardens from twenty to forty acres were common. This was the centre of the Marshland fruit-growing, which to be successful must be practised on stiff soil. An orchard that he knew which had been planted on light land was a complete failure, and trees there sixteen years old had been altogether beaten by others of his own of half that age.

Of co-operation for the collection and disposal of fruit &c. Mr. Allen stated there was none, adding, 'I wish there were.' He informed me that Marshland generally had lost less money of late years than most other places, although the small men had gone through a hard time, and he never knew the grazing so bad as it was in 1901. He sold all his crops to one man direct before they were ripe, and undertook the picking himself. Some, however, sent their stuff to salesmen and some to the larger local towns.

Mr. Allen also farmed poultry on a considerable scale and found it a good business. He kept 1,200 hens, bought chickens, and supplied eggs. He sold the cockerels at 1s. 9d. a head, and the old fowls as brood-hens to game farms, but never parted with the pullets. This stock was kept in forty houses on wheels, and the smaller the number allotted to each house, the larger was the proportion of eggs that they produced. The chickens cost him a shilling a head to buy, and the hens he sold out at 3s. 3d. delivered, taking back those that proved not to be broody. He did not sit any fowls and kept no turkeys. Mr. Allen told me that £24 a ton was the prevailing price for black currants, and £12 a ton for red currants. The strawberries which he grew were Royal Sovereigns and a few Paxtons. President was, in his opinion, the best sort for private gardens, but it would not travel.

Sir Alfred Bagge, Bart., of Stradsett, between Downham and Swaffham, the owner of a considerable estate, told me that his land was good mixed soil, with some that was heavy at Crimplesham. This was first-class wheat land with a gravel subsoil, and would grow ten to twelve coomb to the acre, twenty coomb of oats, and from twelve to fifteen coomb of barley. The four-course system was practised on his property, and many sheep were reared. The average rent received from 3,000 acres, of which 1,000 were pasture, was 17s. an acre, as against 35s. the acre in the good times. Thus one farm of 180 acres, which used to command £365 a year, in 1901 brought in £160, and

another of 700 acres had fallen from £1,000 to £400 a year. Rents, however, were inclined to increase on his property, which was as good land as any in Norfolk; but much of the light soil round Swaffham, that in the prosperous days only commanded 7s. 6d an acre, was practically derelict. On the whole he thought they had touched bottom, and that the farmers were better off than they had been ten years ago, although the fall in the price of wool had hit them badly. They paid their rent and lived, but they did not save money, though one man whom he mentioned, who bred horses, succeeded with them. He believed also that the farmer who looked after such details as poultry, milk, and butter did pretty well. There was no brisk demand for farms, and he had been working one for three years because it could not be let.

The landlords were, he said, much crippled and many of them, after paying charges, taxes, tithe and repairs, &c., had only their shooting rents left on which to live. Personally he had spent £20,000 on his property, but it had never given him any return. They were fairly well off for labour, but it was not of the same quality as in past days. The young men were going away, and they relied on the middle-aged and old people. This was shown clearly by the shrinkage in the local population. Thus Fincham had fallen from 1,000 in 1881 to 650, Crumpleham from 400 in 1861 to 270, and Stradsett from 180 to 100. One of the reasons for this exodus was that the land could no longer afford to pay more men to stop, with the result that farming was going back, and the fields were not kept so clean as they used to be.

Sir Alfred thought also that the harsh treatment of the labourers by the farmers in time bygone was one of the causes of the present scarcity and inferiority of men, although a good hand who chose to work could now put £50 a year into his pocket. Of cottages he had nearly enough, which were let at from £3 to £5 a year, rates free, although he would be glad of a few more. At Fincham and West Derham many

cottages stood empty, in the latter place owing probably to the decay of the coprolite industry. His grass lands were good old pastures, but, like many other people, Sir Alfred complained that these are not properly manured and farmed by the tenants, nor is lime sufficiently used as a dressing. In this connection he mentioned a curious circumstance which he had observed, that green sawdust if put upon grass lands produces nettles. It would be interesting to know if any other person has noticed the same thing.

The system followed in his neighbourhood was for the most part one of the grazing of home-bred Shorthorn cattle, but cake was not fed to the animals while on the pastures. The sheep were Hampshire Downs crossed with Cotswolds.

As regarded possible remedies, Sir Alfred said that the tithe ought to be commuted in some way, perhaps by means of money borrowed from Government to be repaid within a certain number of years. Also, if Free Trade was to continue, the land tax should be done away with, as land, a raw material, should be free also; further the rating of real and personal property ought to be equalised. Of Protection he supposed it was no use to speak, but he pointed out that whereas in 1846 we grew 22,000,000 quarters of wheat, now we grow under 10,000,000. He said—but for these figures, although I believe them to be correct, I cannot vouch personally, as the numerical facts have slipped my mind—that the Country needed 29,000,000 quarters in all. Therefore if the level of production were brought back even to that of 1846, only 7,000,000 quarters would be wanted from abroad.

On one afternoon I walked over Mr. Edward Bagge's in-hand Fairstead farm of 400 acres, under the guidance of the bailiff, Mr. W. Hine, a very intelligent gentleman who, if I remember right, had lived a long while in Australia. First we visited the stackyard, where we saw oats and barley that had been cut green and made into hay. The result was an excellent fodder which is chaffed and given to the cattle and horses; oats, however, making better hay than barley. In South Africa, I remember, we used to practise the same

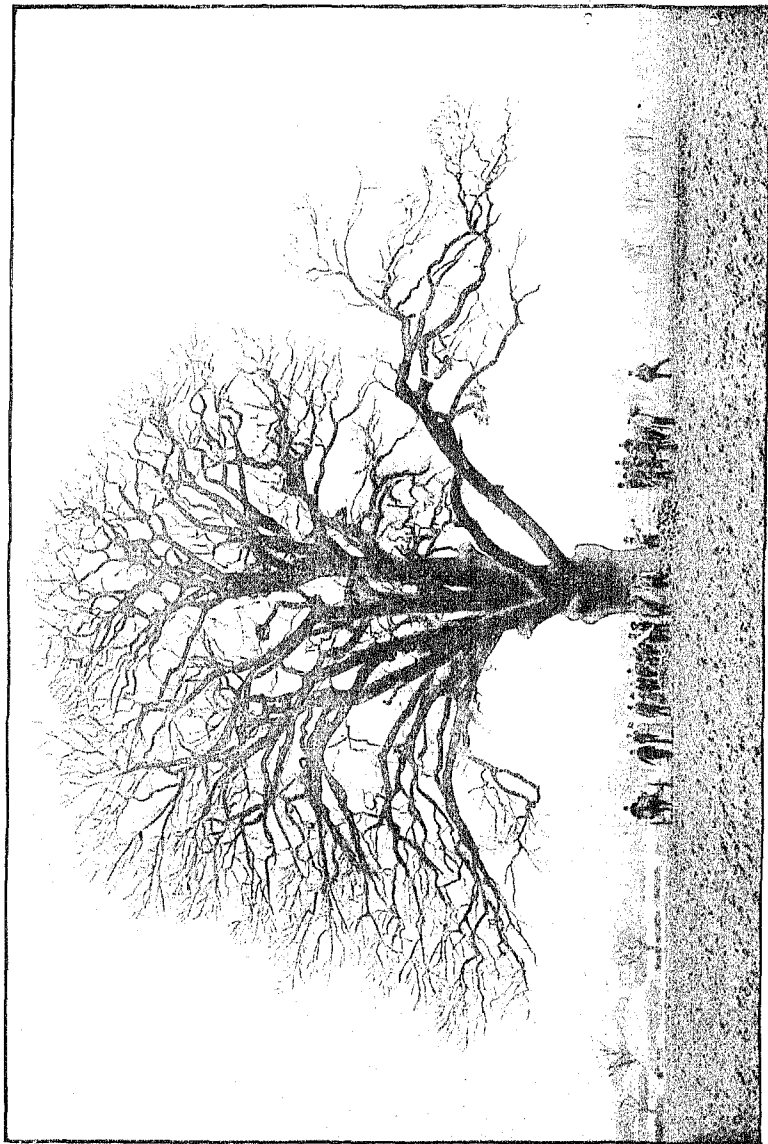


Photo: Revere, Harleston

THE TIVETSHALL OAK
(*Stain 1901*)

plan, only the forage as we called it, was tied up in bundles and not stacked. On this hay Mr. Hine said, the Hereford stores, of which forty were bought in spring, fatted well with the help of a few turnips. The country seen from this farm is very pretty, gently undulating and broken by large woods; a wide green lane leading from the park and flanked with oaks looking especially attractive even under the severe sky of a winter's day. Below, running from Lynn, lies the valley of black, peaty soil with white sand in places and chiefly clothed in grass, while beyond it rises the embattled tower of Middleton Church.

Field No. 1, which we entered, was a scaldy piece of ground sown with wheat that had come up well, but on this soil rarely yielded more than three and a half quarters to the acre. Field No. 2 was under black winter oats that in normal seasons returned at best about five quarters to the acre. No. 3 was coming for spring oats, and No. 4 was a meadow sloping to the valley; a rather useless piece of land which it was impossible to rid of water, as if drained the pipes silted up. The sand which is found here is of a very fine quality, and much of it is sold to bottle-makers on a small royalty. Lucerne does not flourish upon this soil, although not far away a milkman was said to make 200 or 300 acres of it into ensilage, which he fed to dairy cows.

Mr. Hine informed us that this feeding of cows with ensilage is much discouraged by the milk contractors in London, as they say it gives a high flavour to the milk and makes the cleansing of the churns in which it travels, difficult. Here we saw Carr stone cropping out in the dykes, the water of which it turns to a reddish hue. It is a sandy, ruddy-coloured rock which crumbles under the influences of frost and weather, and of no great value, although it is sometimes used for building purposes. Thus I think that the church at Middleton is built of Carr stone. Water which is tainted by it does not injure aged cattle, but is apt to cause inflammation of the bowels in young stock.

Field No. 5, a fallow, was also so wet that the straw of

crops planted on it sometimes goes down. On the flat land below were rushy pastures with some whins growing upon them, which for stock-keeping purposes, Mr. Hine said, were better than they looked. Also we saw thirty or forty acres of grass that had been laid down about twenty-five years before. Its quality was but moderate, and here in this winter season, moss was more apparent than clover. Altogether, although this was a pretty farm, I can quite understand that Mr. Bagge found it difficult to make it pay.

I think it was on my way back to the Hall that afternoon that I met three labourers walking together on the road, all of whom were deformed in some way or other. Mr. Hine said that the labour was bad and scarce; a condition of affairs that does not seem to have improved during the present year, that is, if I may believe the following paragraph cut from the 'Morning Post' of August 26:—

Harvest Prospects.—In West Norfolk, and especially in the marshland district, much of the corn having been laid by wind and rain cannot be reaped by machinery, and labour is scarce. At King's Lynn yesterday the town crier was sent round by a well-known farmer to announce that men were wanted to cut and 'shock,' and offering £1 per acre.

A gentleman whom I saw in this neighbourhood, who did not wish that his name should be mentioned, said that he both owned land which he farmed and hired other land. On his marshland, which was exceptionally good, he had done very fairly well, especially with potatoes and clover hay, but he had taken nothing out of his light land place, for a man lost as much there in one dry year as he could make in three good seasons. On this farm he had just been holding his own at a reduced rent. Such land had fallen 50 per cent. in rental value, which in 1901 ranged from 5s. to 10s. an acre.

These owners had been very hard hit, as the rent they received was not even sufficient to pay an interest on the capital invested in buildings &c., and except for shooting purposes the land itself had little value. Farmers, he thought, were mostly holding their own, but labour was

short and its quality was not so good as it used to be. The higher the wages that the men received, the less work they did for them, and the young people went away. He relied on sheep, barley, and turnips. He bred and fed off sheep and cattle, as he found that they made more money than corn.

Subsequently I visited this gentleman's light land farm, where he kept eighty bullocks and from 600 to 700 sheep. His labour, he said, cost him 10s. on the grass land and 25s. on the arable, as against 50s. per acre on the arable in marshland. The sheep, which were pure Suffolks, we found feeding on white turnips that had been drilled on a field where the swedes had missed through drought. The barley here was not a very good sample in 1901, being thin in the grain and uneven in size. It was selling for 13s. 6d. and 14s. a coomb. The swedes were small from lack of moisture, but the mangold looked good. I noticed that there was a great deal of game on this farm, and that the yards lay very hollow, and thus were apt to become water-logged—a common fault in Norfolk premises. This arises from the continual carting away of manure, together with some of the bottom on which it lies, that is not replaced as it ought to be with stone or other suitable material.

From Gaywood to Castle Rising the road runs through undulating well-forested, thin-soiled country. Near that village is a stretch of land covered with heath and bracken where Carr rock crops out of the sand-dunes. Here are planted birch, Scotch firs, with other trees, and game seemed to be very plentiful. Castle Rising, strange as it may seem, was once a seaport and a noted town which returned two members to Parliament. Now its population numbers about 300 souls, and the place is chiefly remarkable for the ruins of the castle which stands upon a vast earthwork reared by I know not whom. Here was imprisoned and died a queen, Isabella of France, wife of Edward II.; and I was shown the chamber which she is said to have occupied in the old Norman keep. From Castle Rising to Sandringham we drove on through a bottom marsh, then up an incline to sand-hills

covered with bracken, heath, and plantations of Scotch firs. The timber here was principally birch and larch, while alongside the road grew rhododendrons. Certainly this is an ideal shooting country and very attractive in its aspect.

At Sandringham, having received permission to inspect the stock and horses for which these farms are famous, I met Mr. Frank Beck, agent to His Majesty's estate, who was most kind in showing me everything of interest and giving me much information concerning the district and its husbandry.

Mr. Beck said that in the next parish of Wolferton the soil is heavy clay. In Sandringham it is sandy. I wonder, by the way, if it is to this fact that the village owes its name. To the west the land which has been reclaimed, is heavy, and a large proportion of it—about half—is grass. Between the House and Wolferton station it is sand and Carr, and to the east, light with a chalk subsoil. The estate, Mr. Beck told me, consists of 11,000 acres, of which 7,000 were let at rents which varied from 13s. to £1 the acre. The system followed on the in-hand farms was mainly four-course.

The barley produced is a good sample, and what was marketed that year had fetched 32s. a quarter. Of wheat very little was grown on the light land, but they cropped a considerable area of oats. The roots were good, for, as Mr. Beck remarked, in 1901 West Norfolk was more favoured in respect to its root crop than were many other places. The drought, however, would prevent their grazing many bullocks during the remainder of that year. Sainfoin, he said, did very well in that district, and was most useful. Lucerne was grown also, but in his opinion not in sufficient quantity. This, however, is a crop that requires very good cultivation, and one that must be kept clean, which may account for its lack of popularity. Pedigree cattle, sheep, and horses were bred on the farm; also many stores were bought in and grazed, Lincoln Reds, Scotch and Blue-greys being the favourite sorts. Mr. Beck said that the labour difficulty in that neighbourhood was not so bad as it had been, and that their

wages on the Sandringham estate, which were then 13s. a week, were kept at the same level as those paid by the surrounding tenantry

The first place that Mr. Beck took me to visit was the Sandringham Club, a most excellent institution established by the King, when he was Prince of Wales, for men and lads above the age of fourteen who work on the estate. The members of the club pay a subscription of 1s. a quarter, and can be supplied with tea &c. and one pint of beer a day, all of which refreshments must be paid for at the time that they are ordered. Here is a very good recreation room provided with plenty of papers and other means of information and amusement, and attached to the building a doctor's club and surgery, which is, as I understood, managed on a separate basis. It is obvious that such an institution as this Sandringham Club must do much to brighten the lives of the labourers and make them content with their lot, and it would be an excellent thing if His Majesty's example in founding it were copied on many other great estates.

On the home-farm, which covers, I think, some 2,000 acres, where much planting of larch, Austrian and Scotch firs has been done, we first saw the Southdown sheep, a very good lot, of which eighteen score were kept. One of the rams came from the Duke of Richmond, and the best of these sheep are exhibited at the leading shows, including the Royal, and in winter at Smithfield and Norwich. Mr. Beck said that they did very well with these Southdowns. Next we visited some small but beautifully arranged farm buildings where the Prince of Wales kept his Red Polls, of which he has some of the best in the county. As a breeder of this handsome and most useful class of cattle I am very glad that His Royal Highness has chosen to give it such practical encouragement. Red Polls are too much neglected even in their native East Anglia, chiefly, I believe, because they do not compare favourably in size with such animals as Short-horns, Lincoln Reds, and Herefords. But they have many other merits, of which hardiness is one of the greatest, to say

nothing of the quality, and when they are well managed and selected, the quantity of their milk. I agree, however, with Mr. Beck that they ought to go out young to the butcher. At two years old, if properly grazed, there is no better beef.

We then saw the Shire horses. Three stallions which were kindly brought out for my inspection, two of them two years, and one three years old, were really magnificent animals. This last, named Benedick, took first prizes at the Royal and other shows; and one of the two-year-olds won the champion prize and cup in London. The system was to graze the Shires on heavy land and foal the mares on light land. Mr. Beck explained that if it was desired to make good prices of these, or indeed of any stock, it was necessary to have the best animals in the country and to keep them under the most natural conditions possible. Thus he told me that four beautiful fillies which I saw would have no shelter until they were sold in the following February, when at a year old, they were expected to fetch £200 each. Of these Shires there were from seventy to eighty head in all. Carriage horses used also to be reared, but that branch of the industry had been given up, and Mr. Beck said that in future, so far as these classes of pleasure horses were concerned, it was intended only to breed hackneys pure and simple.

The pedigree Shorthorns which we inspected afterwards were also very fine, especially the famous Red roan bull, Pride of Collyne, a white bull called Crystal Prince, a white heifer of one year and nine months old, and a calf, also white, which was valued at £300.

Passing on we came to the breeding stables in which were kept fifteen thoroughbred mares, the finest, I suppose, in England, that produce an average of ten foals per annum, and His Majesty's two Derby winners, Persimmon and Diamond Jubilee—animals as perfect in appearance as they are in all other qualities. These were housed in large room-like boxes lined with padded leather, to prevent the possibility of their hurting themselves—no unnecessary

precaution, as each of them is worth a moderate fortune. Indeed all the stables, paddocks, &c. designed for the accommodation of these thoroughbreds are as perfect as care and money can make them; and the same may be said generally of every farm building on the Sandringham Estate. Afterwards I was taken to see the model dairy, a delightful place. the Irish Dexters that were fattened for beef and had won many prizes; and the Jersey cows, of which about fifteen were kept for milk but never shown.

Another most interesting place was Her Majesty the Queen's technical school, where young people of the neighbourhood are taught carving, joinery, brass and copper work, weaving and spinning of homespun from the wool of the Sandringham Southdowns, tapestry work, &c. The skill which some of the pupils had developed in these arts was really wonderful, especially in those of carving and joinery. All the articles manufactured are for sale at extremely moderate prices, including ash and tea trays, photograph frames, cigarette boxes, and carved clocks. The homespun, which was of as good a quality as any that I have seen in Scotland, is also obtainable at 5s., or if machine-made at 4s., the yard; and blankets, rugs, golf capes, &c. are made to order, the school being managed upon strictly business and practical principles. Its influence must be excellent, and I am sure that many of the fortunate pupils who pass through it, need have little cause hereafter to be anxious as to how they shall earn their livelihoods.

I suppose that there does not and cannot exist anywhere in the world another such stock of high-bred animals of all classes as may be seen at Sandringham. It must not be supposed, however, that the breeding of these superb creatures is merely a costly amusement, since when they are sold they command very high prices, which probably return a good interest on the capital invested in their production. Also they serve another valuable purpose, that of improving the horse, cattle, and sheep stock throughout the kingdom. In short, the farming is as well managed as are all other depart-

ments of this wonderful estate. Mr. Beck told me that this is principally due to His Majesty himself, who takes a most lively interest in everything connected with his property, all the details of which are known to him and indeed pass through his hands. Thus in the spring Mr. Beck accompanies the King round the woods, where he marks the trees and gives personal directions as to felling or planting. In the same way he takes the head gardener through the gardens, visits the club rooms, inspects the stock and horses, and in fact, Mr. Beck said, 'starts the whole thing.'

If I may say so with respect, it strikes me as very fortunate for all classes connected with the land that our Sovereign should be one who from practical experience is able thoroughly to enter into the hopes and fears incident to their various industries and occupations. As a landlord His Majesty is familiar with the trials and difficulties of the owners of estates; as the first of farmers in his realm, he must thoroughly understand and appreciate those of the cultivators of the soil; and as a large employer of labour, which nowhere is more thoughtfully considered than at Sandringham, the needs and details of the lives of the toilers on the land, who still form so considerable a proportion of his subjects in Britain, must be known to him to the last particular.

I should add that the cottages at Sandringham are as good as they are pretty, and are let at a rent of 1s. 6d. a week, while those known as the Alexandra Cottages are hired at £4 10s. a year.

I find that Arthur Young visited Sandringham, then all unconscious of its future fame, about the year 1770. He says of it:—

About *Sandringham*, the seat of *Henry Cornish Henley*, Esq., are very considerable tracts of sandy land, which are applied at present only to the feeding rabbits: it is a very barren soil, but not, I apprehend, incapable of cultivation: it lets from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. an acre in warrens. Mr. *Henley* has tried some experiments on it lately, with a view to discover how far it will answer

cultivating. The value of it is prodigiously advanced by planting; that gentleman has formed several plantations, which thrive extremely. all the firs do well, and will pay a better rent for the land than any husbandry.

In supposing that the Sandringham land was not incapable of cultivation, Mr. Arthur Young showed his usual acumen, as could he see it to-day, after the lapse of 130 years, he would be the first to acknowledge.

Travelling to Merton Hall, near Watton, in South-western Norfolk, where I was the guest of Lord Walsingham, I stopped at Roudham Junction. Here are wide, brown moorlands marked with lines of Scotch firs, which looked very bleak and bare in the low lights of a late autumn evening, and were so lonesome that the occasional call of some bird seemed only to accentuate their silence. About here the root crops, where any could be seen, were very thin. I was told that at Brettenham in this neighbourhood farming was being abandoned, and that the owner purposed to use the land for the breeding of thoroughbreds. Some ewes were running on this heath and heather-clad soil. At Wretham, a little further on, the land is similar in character, and, so far as I could judge, appeared almost useless for farming under present circumstances.

Mr. R. P. Harding, the sub-agent at Merton, said that the soil there was for the most part light, with a chalk subsoil, and the rents, which had fallen 30 per cent. at Merton and perhaps 50 per cent. on the whole estate, averaged about 10s. the acre. One of the farms of 600 acres was let for £220, but on this holding were 50 acres of heath, some tumble-down arable, the rest being corn land and pasture. Labour, Mr. Harding told me, was very scarce in 1900, but in 1901 they had sufficient. The men, however, would not take up piece labour or learn skilled work, and the women would do nothing. Lads were hard to find, and some of them went to the engineering factory at Thetford, the general wish of the parents being that their children should go into trade. He could see no good prospect for agriculture

in that part of Norfolk. Their stand-bys, Mr. Harding said, were corn, principally barley—of which they grew a good sample—sheep and turnips. The sheep were Suffolk Black-face crossed with Cotswolds. They did not fat out many bullocks, and the land would not rear good horses, so the colts were sometimes sent on 'joist' to the Fens to grow up there. Occasionally they took in lambs at 3s. a week per score, the owner finding the cake and labour. They practised the four-course cropping system: roots which were fed off, barley, seeds, wheat or oats

On the following day I drove through a large part of the Merton estate in the company of Mr. Harding, all the land we travelled through being very wide and open. At the small, low-lying village of Tottington I saw the best pastures in this district; indeed one of them of eight acres was so exceptionally good that, even in 1901, thirty head of bullocks had been running on it for a while. In that dry year, however, the light land had produced very poor crops and the roots were inferior. Still it has enough substance in it to grow good oak and ash, of which I saw many. The cottages, which were built for the most part of clay lump, seemed very fair. The average rent of holdings in this district was about 10s. the acre. On the Mortimer Farm, that was in hand, which we visited, whereof 120 acres were arable and fifty pasture, much of the land was very light, and whins and Scotch firs were used as shelter fences. That season 138 coomb of white oats, not including the dross corn, had been sold off eleven acres; and although thin and rather piny the barley, which I sampled from the stack, was of a good colour. The cows, of which many used to be kept here, had been given up owing to the lack of milkers. Steers were grazed, and at two years old sold out as stores, the best of the heifers being bred from for dairy purposes.

Here the clover ley, grown after barley on a chalky sub-soil, had a very good bottom for the season, and nine acres of lucerne, also drilled with barley that spring, was an excellent plant.

At Sturston, further on, was another in-hand, poor, light-soil farm of 300 acres, of which 100 acres were derelict—that is, given up to rabbits. There was, however, one good wet meadow. I noticed that a man employed thatching a stack, as is now commonly the case in his trade, was very old. The house here is ancient, and, from the size of the buildings, it was evident that this farm once carried a great deal of stock. The wife of the bailiff, an old woman of seventy, took Mr. Harding to see a sick horse which she was doctoring, saying that she ‘warn’t afraid of hosses.’ Clearly this good lady was one of the old sort. The women of her class of the present day keep clear of ‘hosses.’

Driving on over a wide stretch of derelict land, given up to pheasants and rabbits, we came to the Waterloo Farm, now of about 500 acres, occupied for the last eighteen years by Mr. Clark at a rent which had fallen from £150 to £100 a year. Mr. Clark said that farmers of light lands were getting on very badly, and did not do more than make a living. Of labour he had just about enough, although nearly all the young folk went away to towns. He kept no breeding flock, but bought in lambs, some of which he sold out fat as hoggetts. His shift was four-course: roots, barley, seeds, wheat or oats, but no winter oats. This land, he said, did not stand drought, and would not grow good barley; his that year had fetched only 24s. a quarter. He sold £30 worth of rabbits per annum, which helped him; but he complained that they had gone down much in price. Mr. Clark thought the outlook very bad for farmers, wool being such a shocking trade and wheat so low. The wages he paid were 13s. a week, and 14s. 6d. for horsemen.

In the village of Stanford, where the land was of the same character, we passed the Cock Farm, of which the large buildings were falling down. The farmhouse was occupied by a small-holder, and the rest of the land was incorporated into the Water-end Farm, which Lord Walsingham had in hand. In this district a 400-acre farm that did

not belong to the estate was pointed out to me which was said to be let for £100 a year. The house on this farm, which was light land, seemed to be very good.

On the Water-end Farm of 500 or 600 acres, that I visited next, forty cows were kept, of which the milk was sent to London once a day, where it commanded 1s. 8d. a barn gallon, and with it some market-garden produce. There was no trouble here about milkers, as those who used to be employed on Mortimer's Farm were available to help in this work. Mr. Harding said that this milk and vegetable business answered well. Rabbits were a great trouble on this place, and I saw two parties of warreners with their dogs engaged in destroying them. Worse, however, than the rabbits are the pigeons. Thus I went on to one field of twelve acres that, with the exception of a single corner by the stockman's house, had been entirely cleared of turnips by these destructive birds, which were then feeding on it in flocks. This, of course, meant a total loss of seed, labour, and rent. The pigeons do most damage in a dry season, when they need moisture, as turnips sown in a damp time grow quicker than they can destroy them. They are also very injurious to layers in the spring. When I asked the stockman why he did not keep lads to scare them away, he replied, 'There ain't a boy here at all, sir!'

All this country is very wide and open, unfenced and divided up by fir belts. It was full of game, of which I saw great quantities.

The Eastmere Farm, a little further on, seemed to be very well cultivated. Here there was a large flock of half-bred ewes of the Suffolk stamp. On the home-farm of 700 acres, of which 250 were arable and the rest grass land, the rent charged was £585, which Mr. Harding thought too much. The pasture on this sandy land was of poor quality. Thirteen score of ewes and thirty cows were kept, and barley, wheat, and oats were grown on the arable.

Mr. John Wade, of the Broomehill Farm, told me he thought that where farmers attended to business they made a living. Labour had, he said, been very scarce, but at that

time they had enough. The boys, however, would not work on the land, and moved away to towns. He thought that education did the mischief, as lads did not get into the fields young enough. The wages were 13s. a week, and 14s. and a house for horsemen but some farmers had dropped them 1s. There were now plenty of very ordinary men, of whom the more youthful only cared to do light work. His shift was four-course, and about a fifth of his land was in pasture. The barley it produced was indifferent, but the best land grew good wheat, a crop of which he had decreased his area.

Mr. Wade considered the outlook very uncertain. It was he said, difficult to see much light when a sack of wheat could be delivered from America for less than it cost to send it from Watton to London. He mentioned that the charges on a truck of fifteen bullocks from Watton to Lynn, a distance of only thirty miles, came to £3.¹ The season, he told me, had been very bad, roots being poor and corn light. I do not know what this farm brought in, but Mr. Harding told me that the rents of that district ran from nothing up to 15s. an acre. He added that on some large neighbouring properties they averaged much less.

Lord Walsingham, amongst much other interesting information, kindly furnished me with some specimen comparative rentals taken from records of farms on his estate. Thus in 1863 the rent of the Waterloo Farm of 740 acres was £600 a year. In 1900 it was £127. In 1870 this farm had already fallen to £500 a year, and there were arrears on it amounting to £283. It was originally warren, reclaimed about 1845 by the late Lord Walsingham, and called Waterloo Farm because at a single netting the same number of rabbits were taken as men were killed at Waterloo. He broke it up, coated it with from 70 to 120 loads of marl per acre—a very expensive process—and in subsequent years, after reclaying it, let it for £600. On this farm, in 1862, 125 acres sown with wheat produced 667 coomb, which sold for £885 19s. plus £103 0s. 6d., the value of wheat consumed on

¹ The accuracy of these figures has since been disputed by the Great Eastern Railway. H. R. H 1903.

the place. Thus we see that if the price is remunerative this and thousands of acres of similar land can produce a fair crop of wheat. Now, however, not much is grown on them—only enough to supply the necessary straw and a little over.

In 1863 Cooper's Farm of 352 acres was let for £430. In 1901 the rent was £250. In 1863 Eastmere, 541 acres, was let for £400. In 1901 the rent was £145. Lord Walsingham said that a great deal of land that used to be under corn had gone out of cultivation and was used as sheep-run, adding that he wished he had a shilling for every pound his father had sunk in these lands. He thought that the conditions of the Merton Estate were better than those of the district generally, especially of that poor part of it which was known as the Breck Sands, that in some past age, as the marum grasses which still grow on it show, had been coast sand-hills. This district, roughly speaking, runs from Swaffham on the north to Icklingham and Fakenham Magna on the south, and from Quidenham and Cressingham on the east to Lakenham and Stoke Ferry on the west.

The reason of the superior position of the Merton Estate was that more money had been spent on it than on many similar properties, and that the farms had been consistently taken in hand to save them from becoming derelict. He believed that on these light lands owners were only 'muddling along' without making any progress. That they were doing so much as this in sundry instances was due to the fact that the sporting value of their properties had helped them. Indeed the majority of owners in that district would receive no advantage from their land were it not for its suitability to the purposes of game rearing. At the same time the profit derived from sporting rents was overrated, as the great expense of preserving was not sufficiently considered. The sale value of the game killed, in his experience, about represented the actual cash profit over the cost of its upkeep.

Lord Walsingham was certain that in the long run it was better for a man to farm his own land, if he could provide sufficient capital and competent management, than to let it at

any price to any sort of tenant. As an example, he quoted the case of a heavy-land farm of 400 acres which he owned in Suffolk. After continual reductions he found that in 1894 he was paying more in tithe than the tenant was paying in rent, and took the holding in hand. Including the amount due for covenants, he invested about £2,000 in stocking the farm. The results were : Profit in 1895, £386 ; 1896, £429 ; 1897, £1,130 ; 1898, £1,467 ; 1899, £877 ; 1900, £704. Out of these sums, however, rent and interest on capital should be deducted. Lord Walsingham explained that the case of this farm, which is badly situated on the side of a hill three miles from a station, was exceptional, and that good management had much to do with this success. Pigs, that were bred in large numbers, had been one of the chief sources of profit there, poultry also had brought in money, which is not common on heavy-land farms. He added that he could show no similar results on any of his light-land holdings.

The figures, which I saw, are beyond question, but I repeat here what I said to Lord Walsingham, that in all my experience, which is, I suppose, as extensive as that of any man in England, hop and fruit husbandry alone excepted, to the best of my recollection I have met with no more striking instance of successful farming in England. Of course in this particular case a curious run of luck may have increased the receipts, or it may be that the system followed—that of selling off hay, keeping little horned and sheep stock, and a large head of pigs—accounted for it on this heavy land.

Lord Walsingham said that Norfolk agriculture had gone back enormously of late years. As to the future he thought that the interests connected with the land might struggle on for a while, much as they do at present, but he could see no prospect of any considerable improvement, although he considered that prices were more likely to rise than to fall further. If foreign competition became more acute the conditions must change. First, the land would go out of cultivation, and after that—well, he could not say.

So far as he was able to foresee, when the present generation of labourers died the continual migration of the young would practically bring our present system of husbandry to an end. He could suggest no remedy if prices did not improve, but he thought that if lads were brought into touch with the land earlier than was now the case, it might help to keep up the population in the villages. On the whole Lord Walsingham considered that the agricultural outlook was very poor but not hopeless. He added that he had a feeling that the great output of gold which might be expected in the next few years will raise the prices of all produce and so improve farming prospects. Wide areas of foreign land were becoming rather wheat-sick and were not likely to be manured, whilst other suitable areas not yet brought under wheat were few and far between. On the gold question I venture no opinion, but are such suitable areas as 'few and far between' as Lord Walsingham thinks?

The general characteristics of the Thetford district, with which indeed I have been familiar from my youth, as I observed them on my homeward way *via* Tivetshall, are wide, heathy, and bracken-covered lands, broken here and there by wind belts of fir. Game seems to be the principal crop that is reared upon them now, but I can remember when more corn was grown.

It was, I think, on one of my previous agricultural journeys in 1901 that I noted with dismay at Tivetshall that the famous oak which for centuries—six or eight I should judge—had stood there, the greatest ornament of all this countryside, had been cut down. There it lay, a gigantic balk of yellow timber, slain, not by decay or the winds, but by the hand of man. I walked to the tree and measured it as well as I could with a foot-rule. At the height of a tall man above the butt, it was at least seven feet in diameter—that is, about twenty-one in circumference after barking. The main branches at the fork, which were splintered by the tremendous shock of its fall, would of themselves have been accounted as large trees. When in full summer leaf,

as I have seen it many times, growing as it did upon a crest of land, the beauty of this oak, which was quite sound, although it had lost several boughs in recent days, I at least never can forget. To look at it as it lay prone was to me like standing over the face of a dead friend. It was, I am told, felled by Mr. Jonathan Boyce, since deceased, a Tivetshall-born gentleman, who, having made a fortune in America in the timber trade, purchased a considerable amount of property in his native parish, where, amongst others, stood the Tivetshall oak. Why a man reported to be rich should have done this deed I cannot say, since, large as it was, the value of the timber would not have amounted to more than £50 or £60. Nor can the damage that its shade may have wrought to an acre or so of soil have been of any great account. I presume, however, that, seeing a fine tree, his professional instincts were too strong for him.

Looked at from a public point of view, it seems hard that an individual should have it in his power to work such irreparable destruction. I am sure, in this case at any rate, that the inhabitants of Norfolk would gladly have subscribed the full value of the tree with that of the acre of land on which it stood, if thereby they could have saved it to succeeding generations. I was fortunate enough to obtain a photograph, which I reproduce, of this splendid oak with the fatal line already fixed, taken by Mr. Reeve, of Harleston. Forty or fifty years ago there were two others that could compare with it—one at Kirby Cane Hall and one at Broome Place, both of them within a few miles of Ditchingham. Now the timber merchant has all three.

An intelligent labouring man with whom I spoke on this farm of 456 acres of good mixed soil, told me that it was purchased in the good times for £18,000, and sold to the late Mr. Boyce in 1900 for £7,000. This, I believe, is a fair sample of the drop in value of much of the land in the Tivetshall district.

In the Dereham district, which is the very centre of

Norfolk, I was the guest in June 1902 of Mr. F. W. Wilson, M.P., of the Dale Farm, Scarning.

Mr. Wilson took me first to the Honeypot Farm of 150 acres at Wendling, where the soil is mixed, with a clay sub-soil. Here I saw Mr. Land, the steward to Mr. Dann who works this and another heavy land farm—in all about 450 acres. Mr. Land said that about a quarter of their farms were pasture, which was a fair average in that countryside. They followed the four-course shift: wheat or oats, turnips, barley, seeds. Farmers, he thought, were just ‘wriggling along’ at a rent in that district of about 15s. the acre. The capital they employed was about £8 the acre. There was no competition for large holdings, but small farms of from 50 to 100 acres were sought after. The land, he said, was subject to charlock, but was good root soil, and would grow five quarters of wheat and from five to six quarters of a malting sample of barley to the acre.

Of labour they had none to spare, but only some of the young men went away. Wages were 12s. a week, with £7 10s. in harvest and threepence an hour overtime and beer at haysel. Horsemen received 14s. a week, as a rule without a free house. Some piecework was done, and there had been a local drop of 1s. a week since the previous year. The cottages, he said, were fairly good, but there were not enough of them. If there were more cottages there would be more labour. The buildings of this farm, which I visited, were of the old Norfolk clay-lump, and wood-clad. Among the growing wheat was some charlock, but the swede land and the barley, which was broadcasted, seemed very clean. The mangold was only a three-quarter plant, as a great deal of it had been taken off by wire-worm.

On this farm I saw two of the labourers, named Barrett and Barker, spending the dinner hour in working their gardens, which were excellently kept. These men owned a sow apiece, and looked very cheerful and contented.

The next farmer whom I visited in Wendling was Mr. W. J. Balding, who formerly had been the station-master, and

now filled the positions of clerk to the School Board and overseer. Here the buildings were not good, and the cow-stable was of clay-lump. Mr. Balding, who farmed 180 acres of heavy land, which he described as of very good quality, said farmers were just living: they paid their rents and earned their daily bread, no more. Still he told me that if he possessed the capital he would put his son, who had a taste for it, into the business. The rents of that district, which used to be 30s. and £2, now averaged £1 an acre, at which price there was a competition for farms. The selling value of land was about £10 the acre, and a good farm at Bradenham, in the neighbourhood, had just made that sum.

Of labour, owing to the stoppage or diminution of local businesses, they had more than was available five years before, and a few people had come back from the towns. Mr. Balding practised mixed farming—sheep, corn, and fattening bullocks—but relied chiefly on his stock, which consisted of stores that were bought in and four milch cows. He said that if he trusted to the ‘barn-door’ he would be ‘far behind.’

Before going on to Scarning Mr. Wilson took me through the bottom pasture, which lies beneath his ancient and picturesque house, that is believed to have been the home of some dignitary among the old monks, to the site of Wendling Abbey, which I had not visited since I used to fish for trout in the stream there some five-and-thirty years ago. This stream we crossed where the friars had their mill, of which the race is now used to work a water-ram.

The ancient Abbey of St. Mary was founded about 1267, and its site is now marked only by a single block of stonework, which has unaccountably been spared by the builders of houses and the menders of roads. It lay very low by the banks of the little river, which among so much change, doubtless still remains the same as it was in the days when the monks drew their water there. It is curious to observe how this desire to be quite near water, which was almost

universal amongst our ancestors in the middle ages, outweighed the inconvenience and unhealthiness of the damp and low-lying situations that they chose to build on.

Here I had a lesson in economy. Mr. Wilson and an Oxford College had both of them been obliged to rebuild bridges here for their own convenience or that of their tenants. The College bridge was constructed of fine stone and brick, the cost of which must, I imagine, have made a wide hole in the year's rent. Mr. Wilson, on the other hand, had been content to repair an old arch built of the Abbey stone, with some hedgerow oaks, worked into it by the village carpenter at the cost of a few pounds, but in so solid a fashion that the structure will stand for many years. Often absent landowners are put to much unnecessary expense in such matters.

In Scarning I first visited Mr. Frederick Wade, of the Church Farm, of 400 acres of heavy land, which is the property of Mr. Evans-Lombe. Mr. Wade said that one-third of his farm was pasture, that he followed the four-course shift, kept thirteen score of Blackface ewes, and fatted cattle. He also relied upon stock for his profit and declared that the barn door was now useless. He informed me that it took farmers 'all their time' to live, and to do this their wives must work as hard as they did themselves. For labour they were fairly well off, but there was no surplus, and the young people were going away very much. The wages were 13s. or 14s., and a house for carters, with harvest and haysel money and a good deal of piecework. There was, Mr. Wade said, seldom a farm to let. The average rents were, he told me, £1 an acre, and the average selling value for Scarning land was about £20 the acre. This was excellent root and wheat soil, but grew a rather coarse barley. The buildings on his farm were of brick and very good; I believe that they cost more than £3,000. Hence there is a fine view of an open wooded country stretching away over Gressenhall to Elmham in one direction and to Bradenham in the other.

Another farmer whom I called on was Mr. James

Ringwood, of the White House Farm, of 127 acres, who, I was told, had raised himself from a humble position by hard work. He kept thirteen cows, of which he sent the milk to Dereham, together with his eggs and butter, and followed the four-course system, having, he declared, never cross-cropped in his life. The labour, he said, was a deal of trouble, and no men were to be hired from Scarning, whence many of the young people had gone away. They would not live in ordinary cottages now, although 'one time they were forced to live anyhow.' The rents, he told me, averaged about 15s. the acre, and the land was mostly good. The crops on Mr. Ringwood's farm, over which I walked, looked very well, as did his large, polled Norfolk cows and his horses, all of which he bred. Mrs. Ringwood informed me they had got along by work, and that her husband, who did most of the milking, was up at 5.30 winter and summer, so as to deliver milk in Dereham, three miles away, by seven o'clock. These worthy people said that farmers in that district were 'just getting along.'

Near to the Scarning railway arch Mr. Wilson showed me a five-acre field which he had bought at £30 the acre, and was selling at £16 the half-acre, copyhold redeemed, to folk who wished to build cottages on the land. I think that six of these cottages had been already or were being erected, not by agricultural labourers, who, I suppose, cannot command the necessary credit, but by a carpenter, a bricklayer, a higgler, a wheelwright, a plumber, and a small farmer. Those that I examined were built by the bricklayer and the carpenter, at a cost of £190 each, with money borrowed from a building Society. They are excellent and comfortable dwellings, and, I thought, very cheap—perhaps because they had been put up by people in the trade.

On another day I went over to my eldest brother's place at Bradenham and visited the Wood Farm, where I was born, also the Grove Farm adjoining it, which I found considerably improved in condition compared with what it was when last I saw it, now some years ago. For instance, a

pasture which then I looked on as hopeless is making a fair meadow, even on this cold clay land, which is supposed to be the highest point in Norfolk. The tenant, Mr. James Adcock, told me the last few seasons had been favourable to him, and that he was getting on fairly well. I have noticed all my life that Bradenham people cling very much to their own village, and if there is a farm to let, generally it is, in Norfolk parlance, taken by a native and not by a foreigner.

At Necton, that lies next to Bradenham, Mr. Harvey Mason keeps a herd of Red Polls of very old standing, after that of Mr. Garrett Taylor, of Whitlingham, perhaps the most famous in Norfolk. In going through some papers the other day, that came into my hands as executor to my father, the late Mr. Haggard, of Bradenham, I discovered a printed form which so curiously exemplifies the condition of affairs in Necton about seventy years ago, and doubtless in the county at large, that I reproduce it here. In these days of the rural exodus it is indeed strange to find that such steps were considered necessary in order to reduce 'the Superabundant Population.' Whether or no they were ever acted on I cannot say, nor am I acquainted with anyone who is likely to remember. Practically these regulations, if enforced, must have amounted to something very like a conspiracy in restraint of marriage. It would be interesting to learn if their counterpart can be furnished from any other village or county, or if the details of their origin and history are now discoverable. Doubtless the secret of this anxiety to preserve the inhabitants of Necton from committing such 'voluntary imprudence' was the severe pressure of the poor rate.

Norfolk.

AGREEMENT is hereby had by the Parish of Necton, in Committee assembled, this day of 183 — That from and after date hereof encouragement shall be given to all those young men who shall abstain from Improvident Marriages by continuing

single after the age herein specified, in order that in the course of a few years the Superabundant Population of the said Parish may be diminished, and the situation of the Labourer as well as of the Owner and Occupier of Lands and Tenements, with the blessing of God, thereby benefited.

RESOLVED, FIRST,—That every young man who shall continue single till after 25 years of age, without having brought the burden of Bastardy on society, shall at all times receive, if a good and sufficient Labourer, the highest wages given to any Labourer in the Parish of _____, and if he stand in need, shall receive the relief-money ordered by the Magistrates of the Hundred, without being necessitated to go to the Parish Workhouse.

RESOLVED, SECONDLY,—That every young man who shall continue single till after 28 years of age, without having brought the burden of Bastardy on society, shall at all times receive, if a good and sufficient Labourer, the highest wages given to any Labourer in _____, and if he stand in need, shall receive sixpence per week above the relief-money ordered by the Magistrates of the Hundred, without being necessitated to go to the Parish Workhouse.

RESOLVED, THIRDLY,—That every young man who shall continue single till after the age of 30 years, without having brought the burden of Bastardy on society, shall at all times receive, if a sufficient Labourer, the highest wages given in _____; and if he stand in need, shall receive one shilling per week above the relief-money ordered by the Magistrates of the Hundred, without being necessitated to go to the Parish Workhouse.

And, to encourage those who do marry to marry those women who belong to their own Village,

RESOLVED, FOURTHLY,—That every young woman, belonging to the Parish of Necton, who hath not by bastardy or other misconduct disgraced herself, and who shall be married to a man above 28 years of age, shall receive on her marriage at the hands of the Overseers _____ as a wedding largesse, and if her husband before marriage shall have completed 30 years of age, she shall then in like manner receive as a wedding largesse the sum of _____; provided, in both cases, the man as well as the woman be of good report.

Furthermore, to discourage improvident marriages, the parish hath further agreed—

THAT every young man who shall contract marriage before he is 23 years of age shall, if he in course of time stand in need, be either sent to the Parish Workhouse, or receive one shilling and sixpence per week less than the scale of relief usually given. And further, if any young man shall contract marriage before he is 25 years of age, if he stand in need, he shall either be sent to the Parish Workhouse, or receive one shilling per week less than the scale of relief usually given where parties have married according to a sound discretion.

In order to keep account of such parties, it is hereby resolved,—That an alphabetical Register shall be kept and handed down from one Overseer to another, wherein shall be set forth the *name and time of marriage* of the parties, that due record may be had ever after of such their *voluntary imprudence*.

Mr. Wilson, who kindly favoured me with his views, said that he had been interested in the land all his life. He was a farmer's son and had himself farmed for sixteen years. He thought that prosperity would return to agriculture when every Englishman had a good meat meal each day, as the future of English farming lay, not in corn growing, but in meat production. Foreign countries could swamp us with their corn supplies, but he thought that he observed a decline in the appetite for foreign meat. One of the great evils in the agricultural position was that so few tenants had sufficient capital; they cried for more land than they could manage. He had been farming 100 acres since 1895 with a sufficiency of capital and a turn-over of £9 an acre. In the result he had averaged £1 an acre rent and £1 an acre farmer's profit; therefore as farming-owner the 100 acres brought him in £200 a year.

Mr. Wilson's experience was that small farms paid the landlord better than the large ones. In Scarning such farms brought in 5s. the acre more than did the bigger holdings. He thought that a new class of little farmers might be built up if any could afford to create small-holdings. Certainly there was a demand for them. In that neighbourhood

labourers had risen to be farmers, and the chance of rising existed because the land there has always been in many hands. His opinion was that if the soil of England were in more hands it would be an enormous benefit to the community, and that it would be a good thing if the big estates were split up. Mr. Wilson said that the young people from the country had been allured to the towns by the fictitious bait of higher wages, but he thought that in this respect there was some reaction in Norfolk. He was anxious to see the small craftsmen re-established in the villages and greatly multiplied in number.

My own conclusion on this district was that it is fairly prosperous on the whole. The landlords have, I think, suffered more there than the farmers, who at the reduced rents are doing moderately well, although they are not putting by money. The labour question is not really pressing in the Dereham neighbourhood—perhaps because, as Mr. Wilson said, there are, and always have been here, many small farms which provide industrious men with a chance of rising from the ranks.

Whilst I was stopping at Scarning, by the invitation of the rector, the Rev. Augustus Jessop, D.D., who is so well known through his able and delightful writings on antiquarian and country matters, I attended the formal opening of the new parish Hall. This Hall, which is designed to compete with the public-houses as a place of village entertainment, together with four excellent cottages that are, each of them, to be let at a rent of £5 a year to provide for its upkeep, has been built in a very attractive style at a cost of £3,000 by some benefactress who prefers to remain anonymous. The object is admirable, and so, I believe, will be the effects of the Institution upon the life and tone of the village; but, as I ventured to hint in the remarks I made on the occasion, its weak point seemed to be that it was provided entirely by charity. No villager in Scarning has subscribed a halfpenny towards this place of rest and recreation, or, as I gather, will be called upon to do so in the future, since

apparently the cost of maintaining it is to be met out of the rents of the cottages. I think that folk would appreciate such boons more keenly if they themselves contributed towards their provision. The spirit of self-help is an excellent leaven to infuse into the lump of village life. But this is a general principle, and whatever view may be taken of it, Scarning is undoubtedly to be congratulated upon its good fortune in the matter of this splendid gift.

Another expedition that I made in the summer of 1902 was to Whissonsett, near Fakenham, in the company of Messrs. A. Jermyn, the hon. secretary of the Norfolk Small-Holdings Association; J. H. Diggle, the steward and surveyor; and other members of the Syndicate, to inspect their farm in that village. This association was formed in 1900. At present it owns three farms—at Swaffham, Carbrooke, and Whissonsett respectively—purchased and adapted for small-holdings at a capital cost of about £8,000. The total area is 340 acres, and the tenants number sixty, the lots varying in size from one to sixteen acres, with one considerable holding of fifty acres at Carbrooke.

In each case there were more applicants than there were holdings to be hired. At Whissonsett, indeed, a 'deserted' village with a population depleted by one-third and thirty empty cottages, the demand for grass land was such that thirty-seven acres had to be divided into seventeen lots, the necessary post and wire-fencing running to a total length of one and three-quarter miles.

Driving from the market town of Fakenham to Whissonsett, we passed through Pudding Norton, where the church is a ruin and the land rather light but good. At Colkirk, close by, a mixed soil parish, where I saw some fields of potatoes, I was told that a farm of 600 acres had been sold for £6,000. As we went Mr. Parsons, a member of the party, who grows fruit &c. in the Lynn district, informed me how greatly their industry was hampered by the highness of the railway rates. By way of example, he stated that it

cost him £400 a year to send £1,200 worth of market-garden produce from Lynn to London.

Skinner's Farm at Whissonsett, of ninety-six acres, cost the Association about £2,000, including the enfranchisement fees and, I think, a sum of £150 spent in adapting it to the purposes of small-holdings. It is let out in lots at rents varying from 21s. to 30s the acre, the enterprise being run on business and not on philanthropic lines, with the view of earning four per cent. on the money invested. None of the land is sold to the occupiers. When they were thrown open at Michaelmas, 1901, all the lots were taken at once; indeed fifty acres more could have been disposed of had they been available. When I saw the farm in the present year there were twenty tenants in occupation.

Whissonsett is a purely rural and agricultural village of indifferent land, varying from a clay loam to a light soil. It has no railway near, or resident gentry, or other advantages, and in it I saw a number of deserted cottages, two disused windmills, and some farm buildings that were almost derelict. The small-holdings on the farm are divided up by wire fences. On the grasslands were neat-stock, horses, hoggetts, and ponies. The crops on the arable looked very fair, the mangold, where the soil was light, being drilled on the flat. Still I think that the tenants would do better if they grew garden produce instead of wheat, other cereals and roots, such as are generally cultivated on a farm. In that case, however, the question would arise at once of the expense of carriage, which can only be overcome by some such measure as the establishment of an Agricultural Post.

Mr. Williamson, a holder of eight acres, of which five were pasture and three arable, a pig jobber by trade, whom I found working very hard with his son upon his fields, told me that more land would have been taken if it could be hired, but that on this farm it was not, for the most part, held by labourers. He grumbled a good deal at the state in which the farm had been left by its former tenant, but I

have rarely met anyone entering upon land who did not complain on this score.

Another larger tenant of the Association, Mr. Long, held fifteen acres and the old farmhouse. The buildings attached were, by the way, divided up among the various tenants at an agreed rental, while the barn was common to them all for the purposes of dressing their corn &c. Close by the house was a recreation ground where boys were engaged in playing cricket. This acre and a half, however, was hired from the Syndicate by Mr. Wilson, M.P., in order that it might be devoted to such uses.

Mr. Stangroom, a grocer and old inhabitant of Whissonsett, informed me that the population had fallen from 666, thirty years before, down to 450 owing to the emigration to the towns. He said also that there were thirty empty houses and more males than females in the village. He thought that small-holdings, if they could be increased, would tend to keep the people at home, and that the Association's enterprise was having a good effect in that respect.

So far the Norfolk Small Holdings Association has the appearance of being a considerable success, but of course it has not yet stood the test of time. Still, in my judgment, it is to be regretted that nearly all those connected with it should be prominent members of a single political party. If such promising experiments, undertaken with the view of retaining population on the land, should chance, however unjustly, to become associated in the public mind with party politics, this will, I am sure, militate both against their individual success and the spread of the movement.

In driving from Whissonsett to Wendling, a distance of seven miles, I passed through heavy land into country that grew lighter towards Wendling. With the exception of one 1,100-acre holding belonging to Lord Leicester, this stretch of country struck me, for the most part, as very indifferently farmed. I observed throughout this district also—indeed

the remark applies to the Eastern Counties generally— that a great number of oak trees are being felled. I think that ere long this timber will be scarce in England.

I have now spoken of the good, deep lands and winter-grazing districts of East Norfolk, the thin chalks of the north-west, including Holkham and King's Lynn, the marshlands of the extreme west, which really belong to Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, the sands and sheep-walks round Watton, Thetford, and Brandon in the south, and the sound, stiff lands in the neighbourhood of Dereham, the centre of the county.

It only remains for me, therefore, to say a few words of my own Ditchingham district in the south-east, which is divided from Suffolk by the windings of the river Waveney. This I shall do but briefly for two reasons. I have no space to spare and in my book 'A Farmer's Year' those who desire it may find information as to the agricultural conditions of this part of Norfolk. I propose to content myself, therefore, with quoting the evidence of a landowner, a single typical farmer, together with that of a gentleman engaged in business, and perhaps a few opinions of my own.

Mr. Henry Smith, of Ellingham Hall, the next parish to Ditchingham, said that as the owner of a light land and mixed-soil estate he had been connected with the land since 1852. Also during the last fifteen years he had himself farmed an average of 600 acres. He looked upon the landlords in that part of Norfolk as practically ruined. To take his own instance, where he used to receive 20s. an acre, the tenant paying the tithe, he now took perhaps 11s. the acre, out of which he paid the tithe himself and the rates and taxes, which together would amount perhaps to 7s. the acre. Further, there must be deducted 10 per cent. for the cost of upkeep, so that in practice there was very little indeed left for him, even reckoning the average rent of the estate at from 15s. to 16s. the acre. It came to this, that it was impossible for owners who had no other means to live out of the proceeds of their land. Farmers, Mr. Smith said,

were living from hand to mouth, and many of them were in arrears with their rents. Of labour he and his tenants had enough, as his cottages were good, with good gardens attached to them. The young people were going away very much; he could not keep them. His best labourer was deaf and dumb, and the others were all men of a certain age. He had hardly any young men. The work of the Technical Education Committee, however, had, he thought, improved the skill of the local labourer in thatching, stacking, &c.

Mr. Henry Smith could see no end to this state of affairs unless it was that the land would go out of cultivation. There was nothing to look forward to except ruin. He considered that landed estates had become a luxury for rich men. A heavy-land property of over 1,000 acres, of which thirty-six were wood, with two double cottages, adjoining his estate on the north, was sold six years ago for £5,000. He believed that in the good times this farm had been bought for between £30 and £40 an acre. He was of opinion that unless it was checked, the exodus from the rural districts into the towns would ruin England. The low prices were at the bottom of the trouble. If employers could pay the men higher wages and these had some prospect of advancing themselves, they would stop in the villages. He was favourably disposed towards small-holdings, but the great stumbling-block in the way of their establishment was the expense of the necessary buildings.

Mr. Smith showed me his balance-sheet for the 800 acres of land which he was farming in 1901. The amount to the good that year, out of which he was supposed to pay himself a rent as landlord and to get his living as tenant, was £42. Hay, barley, and sheep were the stand-bys of his farming. Forty years before this 800 acres of land, when let, used to bring him in £700 a year net.

My neighbour Mr. C. H. Poll is the tenant of the Old Hall and Town Farms, Ditchingham, of 240 acres, and the manager of 750 acres belonging to Mr. Carr, of Ditchingham Hall. Mr. Poll, a very intelligent and respected farmer,

said that he had been in the business since he left school about twenty-four years ago, first at Bedingham and since 1887—which was the best year he had ever experienced—at Ditchingham. During that time there had been no general improvement, although he could not say that things were worse now than they had been then, as this would be hardly possible. Indeed he thought that owing to the reduction of rents, local farmers had kept things together a little better during the last ten years than in the five which went before them. During his time, however, they had only made rent and a living, without interest on their capital; and most of those who could retire had done so rather than risk further loss. Still the demand for farms had been greater during the last two years than it was previously, which went to show that things had improved a little of late. Beef had sold well during the winter of 1901, and owing to the dry season, that year the barley was good. They were just ‘jogging along’ and could not expect to do more.

Mr. Poll said that thirty years ago farming was conducted on totally different lines: then they were all arable men working their land on the four-course system. In those days few cows or poultry used to be kept, but now they would do anything to pick up a pound. Also then they used to be anxious to take land upon lease, but this was no longer the case. The farming class was certainly not nearly so good as it had been when he began life. The type was altogether different. Many men who were labourers had been helped by landlords into small-holdings without being called on to pay the valuation. Such people were ‘hand-to-mouth men’ who had saved a little money and borrowed more. They had been put in owing to the scarcity of reliable tenants. This of course did not apply to the occupiers of large farms.

The average size of the holdings in this district he put at from 200 to 300 acres. A numerous class existed by whom the land was farmed worse than it used to be. These did everything on the cheap, employed as little labour as possible,

and worked out their places. Such farming meant steady deterioration in the value of the land, but Mr Poll was careful to explain that it was by no means universal. The grass lands in those parts of Norfolk and Suffolk with which he was acquainted were not sufficiently well farmed. He had dressed his meadows for the last four years with basic slag and crushed bones when he could afford them, but this was not done by one tenant in fifty.

He could not say that the outlook was any better than when he began in the depth of the depression, and he took a black view of the future. The supplies of imported food-stuffs were likely to be as large as ever, and while this was the case there could be no improvement. Mr. Poll's explanation of the continued demand for farms under these circumstances was that a man must live somewhere, and could do so more cheaply in the country than in town. Also he got a good house rent free and an independent position, and other trades were almost as much depressed. He added, however, 'If you want to make money, don't go into farming: it is a fool's game.' Personally if he were without other resources he could not live. In many cases the industry was either artificially supported by the help of outside business or private means, or could only be made to pay when a man did the work himself with the assistance of his family. The owners of land had, he thought, lost more even than the tenants, not only in money but in position. Even on good land the owner could not net more than 10s. an acre, and taking the average of the county through, he did not receive so much. In the majority of cases it was scarcely possible to further lower the rents, as even now they scarcely covered the outgoings.

Fifteen years ago they had a better supply of labour than was now obtainable. The men were practically the same, only grown older, and very few young ones were coming on. Those who remained in this district were, however, still a good lot, but for the most part they were ageing or aged. Boys could not be found: on the Ditchingham Hall Estate

there was not one under eighteen, although, Mr Poll added proudly, 'personally I have two.'

He thought that if trade grew worse some might come back from the towns, but if they did they would be inexperienced. A retired busman 'might drive a cart, but he could not milk a cow.' That of labour must be the great question of the future. The principal cause of the scarcity, in his opinion, was the system of education in force in the country, where we educated children for the towns and paid the bill of their rearing, all for the benefit of the cities which used them up.

The average wage in the Ditchingham district in the summer of 1902 was 12s. a week and harvest money, which varied according to the number of acres to be dealt with per head, but in his case amounted to £7 15s. a man. Mr. Poll said that in this season of 1902 (I write in mid-harvest) the barleys must fall 3s. or 4s. the coomb in price owing to the persistent wet, and wheats would also be depreciated, though not to the same extent. If there were fine weather thenceforward, which I am thankful to say has since come—at any rate for a few days—things would be better than had been expected; still the harvest must be a bad one, and the loss such as many could not withstand. He explained that a number of small farmers are forced to sell at once in order to settle with their men and to find cash for the purchase of their store bullocks. This they would be unable to do owing to the damp condition of the corn and the lateness of its ingathering. He thought, however, that we were better off in this district than in many other places. Nearer to London, for instance, the corns looked worse, as Essex had been visited by more storms.

As regarded possible remedies, he was a Protectionist, and hoped that Protection might come in with a reform of our whole fiscal policy. Still he agreed with me that until the big towns were struck by some national calamity nothing was likely to be done in this direction. Rates on real and personal property should also be equalised; indeed he

contended that arable land, which was the farmer's raw material, ought to pay nothing. He should be assessed on what he earned like other people, not on the raw material. Mr. Poll thought that another possible remedy would be more fixity of tenure for tenants. By this he meant that they ought to receive compensation for all their improvements without the necessity of going to a Court, and that *per contra* the owner should receive compensation where the land had been impoverished by the tenant. He admitted, however, that often the landlord would have nothing to claim against; that tenants could generally drive their own bargains; and that perhaps such a scheme looked better on paper than it would work out in practice. It was, he said, a difficult question.

Mr. Poll thought further that Suffolk covenants under which the incoming tenant, or the landlord if he took the farm in hand, was forced to pay for tillages that were frequently unnecessary, ought to be abolished; also that land ought to be released from its burdens and preferential railway rates made illegal. He was a great believer in the advantages of a man owning the land he farmed, as people would do for themselves what they would not do for others. Government should, he said, advance money at a low rate of interest repayable in instalments to enable those who were anxious to do so to purchase land. He believed also in credit Banks to help little men, and that farmers ought to co-operate for their mutual advantage.

Mr. Poll cropped on a four-course system: wheat or oats, roots, barley, seeds. He kept also from twenty to thirty cows and sent the milk twice a day to London, which he found answered better than grazing, as the turn-over was quicker. He ran hoggetts, which he fed on turnips and cake, having given up ewes when he took to cows, as he found that they did not thrive together. In 1901 his hoggetts had lost him money, as after keeping them six months they brought in only 3s. a head more than he had given for them. Years ago the wool paid for the depreciation of a ewe flock,

but in 1902 the Blackface wool from Ditchingham Hall only fetched the miserable price of sixpence a pound, and the wool of the Cotswold and Blackface half-breds but fivepence halfpenny a pound.

In conclusion Mr. Poll said that he could not understand why farmers put their sons into that business. He had a boy, but he would take good care that he did not become a farmer. At least £2,000 capital would be required to start him, which very likely might gradually waste away, whereas if such a sum were spent on him in any other profession, at twenty-five years of age a young man should be earning his own living and have a good prospect for the future.

Mr. Robert Mann, of the firm of Messrs. R. & W. Mann, whose family have been large maltsters at Wainford Mills, Ditchingham, for several generations, said that he had been well acquainted with this district and the farming interests in it since 1871. From 1879 onwards everything connected with agriculture had been going steadily downhill, though perhaps the descent had not been quite so rapid during the last year or two. In his opinion nothing could stop this decline except better prices for produce, or the investment of more capital in the land whereby its productiveness might be increased. It remained a question, however, whether such increased productiveness would prove remunerative to the producer. He had observed that owing to the poverty of farmers the land had been much exhausted by the lack of adequate fertilisation. The manure used now was often nothing but stained straw, and very different from the rich muck that farmers used to put on in the good times. Also they had not kept to the old four-course shift, but would steal a crop when they found a chance. The consequence was that throughout the district the land was not in its old heart, and weeds had increased.

In former days, he remarked, farmers kept sufficient labour on their holdings to enable them to get in the harvest, but now they had to hire extra hands for this work. Also the labour was not what it used to be. The good

men were the old men, and the young people were going off the land. If the labourers could secure regular employment—which was not always the case—it would be an advantage, but he recognised that it was not possible for farmers to make the land pay unless they were provided with sufficient capital. This had wasted much in Norfolk and Suffolk. The tenants used to be well off, now they were very badly off. Owing to their poverty they did not keep the same amount of stock, and the great reduction that had been made in rents had not compensated them for the losses they had experienced through the fall of the price of produce. He did not consider that the value of corn was likely to improve in our day, but a better sample of barley might be produced by higher farming and more careful thrashing. The foreign barley was often of a superior quality to that which he could buy in this neighbourhood.

As regarded his own business Mr. Mann said that they malted double the quantity of stuff they used to do in 1878, but owing to the competition in the trade, their net return was very little more. He had been one of the first maltsters who kiln-dried barley to any great extent. The wages they paid in their establishment varied from 18s. to 25s. the week, and although the work was hard, the result of this higher tariff was that they could secure plenty of men. His experience was that a good man did not mind working if he were sufficiently rewarded for his labour.

Perhaps I may be allowed to add a few words on my own experience as an owner of land in Norfolk and Suffolk, and as a farmer of my own land and of hired land. The settled estate with which I have to do is one of moderate size and very scattered, and has therefore no sporting advantages. As it happens, however, it includes two good residences, heavy corn land, some light soil and marshes, and certain lots, especially in the neighbourhood of North Walsham and on the outskirts of Bungay, which are of the order that is known as accommodation. It is thus, to some extent, representative of the conditions that prevail in different parts

of Norfolk and Suffolk. In the good days this property used to bring in an income sufficient to the maintenance of a country gentleman's family of the smaller sort. Now the income derived from it is enormously reduced, while the expenses of upkeep have increased. Since I have been connected with the property a large sum has been spent in repairs and buildings, an outlay which seems to have no end, since year by year there are fresh demands made in this respect. Indeed, if the amounts disbursed on improvements on this house were taken into account, the net amount received from the property during the last two-and-twenty years would, I think, prove to be but small. All of these, however, cannot be called strictly necessary, although they have added to its capital value. Thus, had it not been for the fact that I have been able to earn money in other ways, the estate, although practically unencumbered, must have drifted into something like bankruptcy. A life-tenant without additional resources could scarcely have found the rents sufficient to its upkeep, or to enable him when necessary, to take farms in hand.

This, in fact, is what has happened in the case of scores of similar inheritances throughout East Anglia, especially where they have been burdened with mortgages or jointures. Generally, in such instances, they have in the end been sold for whatever they would fetch, and their owners, whose forbears bought them for large sums, have vanished quite away.

Finding some thirteen years ago that the home farm was being worked out, I took it in hand and for convenience in its management hired some small adjoining holdings. Also I took in hand another heavy land farm of about 100 acres at Bedingham, five miles away. The detailed results of my farming up to the date of its publication in 1899 may be found in my book 'A Farmer's Year,' therefore I will not repeat them. Speaking broadly, however, I may say that I am considerably out of pocket over the venture, although for the last year or two I have earned a small rent and some interest

on the capital invested. Also I have considerably improved the condition of the land, so that if I or my successors found it necessary, I think that it would be let at a reasonable sum, either in the original farms or cut up into little tenancies.

My experience is that I am better off as regards the land I hire than as regards that which I own. In the former case I have only to pay my rent, which is not a very considerable item in the turnover of a farm, knowing that if I give up the holding the landlord must satisfy my valuation, and that I am at no expense about the buildings. In the latter I have to earn my own rent, to keep up my own buildings, and if I cease farming, to find a satisfactory tenant—no easy business—who will pay me the valuations. My conclusion is therefore that, in Norfolk and Suffolk, I would rather be a tenant who hires land than an owner who farms his own land.

I am a general farmer, that is to say, I grow corn, keep a ewe flock of Blackface sheep, and about twenty pedigree Red Poll cows, most of the milk of which I manufacture into butter and sell at a fair price to private customers in the neighbourhood. I am a great believer in this Red Poll breed, which I find as useful as they are handsome, as they give an excellent quality of milk, and even the older *gast* cows will fat out well. Hitherto my ewes have numbered about 100, out this year I propose to reduce them to thirty-five. Like Mr. Poll, I find that a large quantity of lambs and cows do not go well together, as to thrive satisfactorily the lambs require constant change of pasture in early spring, just when the grass is needed for the cows.

Both here and at Bedingham I have laid down a good deal of land to permanent pasture; a tedious and expensive business, but one which I consider necessary, as it is becoming more and more obvious that only grass land or land with a large proportion of its acreage in grass retains any real letting value. Sad as it is to say, corn scarcely pays to grow, and the old Norfolk system of winter grazing, involving the cultivation of a large area of root, often proves a doubtful benefit to the farmer. Pasture, however, unpro-

ductive as it is by comparison, is always in demand, and will always find a tenant; also it absorbs but little labour. Therefore to grass the land must go wherever it will, although this is a process that as a general rule can only be satisfactorily carried out when it is in hand. Even if the seed is found for them the vast majority of tenants will not give young pastures the care and good treatment that are necessary to their building up. 'Meadows and natural pastures managed in as slovenly a manner as in any part of the kingdom' wrote Arthur Young of Norfolk over 130 years ago, and his remark holds good to-day.

On the local labour question I have nothing to add to the evidence given by Mr. Poll. Still I may say generally that the labour question is largely a question of cottages, at any rate in those parts of East Anglia with which I am best acquainted, where the people cling so much more closely to the soil of which they are native than they do in many counties. Of course the lowness of the wage and the lack of prospect will always cause a great number, perhaps a majority, of the more enterprising spirits to desert the land, but I am convinced that there are large numbers who would bide in their villages if only they could be sure of constant work and find decent homes in which to live. What is happening all over this Country? Here and there some rich man, when he is absolutely driven to it in order to provide homes for his servants or his labourers, builds a few cottages and writes off the money loss. But nobody else does this—how can they when the rent paid by the labourers, which, although it is as much as they can afford, is totally uneconomic?

So what is taking place? Let anybody who is curious to know leave the main roads and the more populated villages where there are resident gentry, and travel about among those thousands and tens of thousands of acres of arable land which really make up the bulk of East Anglia. Let him examine the hamlets for himself—those of the stamp of Cratfield by Halesworth, for instance—and ask for a few particulars from the parson or from any old fellow whom he meets

upon the road. Then, in nine cases out of ten, he will hear that there used to be more houses than there are now, that so many have fallen down and never been rebuilt and that certain young folk who wanted to marry have gone away because they could find no cottage decent enough in which to live.

Of all this, if our visitor takes the trouble to look round, his own eyes will show him proof. There are the dwellings that look so pretty in summer, with roses and ivy creeping about their crumbling stud work and their rotten thatch, but which often enough are scarcely fit to be inhabited by human beings. There, close at hand, perhaps conveniently placed to receive the surface drainage from the road, or even in wet times from the new-manured fields, is a pond, the local supply of drinking water. A little further down the street there may be houses such as I told of in Whissonsett, their roofs fallen in, their windows broken, their walls cracked. Gradually they have become uninhabitable and, the owners being unable or unwilling to repair them, have been suffered to sink to ruin. Thus gradually the population of our specimen village dwindles. Indeed unless some startling change occurs, its extinction in many cases appears to be but a question of time, because no one can afford to build houses which return no interest; because also the land cannot reward the labourer sufficiently to enable him to build his own, or by the payment of an adequate rent, to make it profitable for anyone else to build it for him.

Of course in the more frequented places things are better. Thus in this immediate neighbourhood, which appears to be thought attractive, many gentry reside, which means that money is spent and accommodation provided somehow for those who work for them. But although leisured or retired people, or rich men in search of sport, or such small position as still appertains to the ownership of land, may gather in certain districts and make what is called a neighbourhood, my experience is that these neighbour-

hoods are mere oases in the desert of rural England. This, as a whole, must stand or fall without the support of such extraneous props as the presence of gentlefolk with money to spend.

As to the future of farming I am of opinion that unless some change happens, of which I can see no symptom, it is likely in days to come to prove profitable to two classes of men only, those who work large areas with the help of machinery and a few highly paid servants, and those who work small areas with the help of their own hands and those of their families. Whatever may be said to the contrary, not only do such small people often make a living, sometimes also they turn the soil to great profit. Here is an example. Close to my gate I have a tenant, a builder, named Johnson, who in addition to a grass pightle, hires from me a four-acre field of no better quality than the other land in its neighbourhood. This he farms on a four-course shift. His crops in 1901 were as follows: One acre of very good roots (exact return not stated); one acre of wheat, yielding nineteen coomb (nine and a half quarters) to the acre; one acre of oats, yielding sixteen coomb (eight quarters) to the acre; one acre of clover hay, yielding about three tons to the acre.

Of course these returns are far higher than any that I can show, the wheat indeed being an enormous crop. They were, however, attained by good farming and high manuring with farmyard muck and soot. Now if this man can raise such crops why should it be impossible for the rest of us by the use of similar methods to approach if not to equal them? To do so generally would be to make farming pay, even at present prices, and enable England moreover to grow nearly all the food that it requires. I am persuaded that most of us attempt to work too much land, and in so doing fail to reach the limit of its possible production.

To return. Between these extremes there is a third class of farmer—the 200 or 300 acre man—impregnated with the traditions of fifty years ago. Often he thinks it beneath his

dignity to work in the field alongside of his labourers, and finds it necessary, even though he has nothing to sell or to buy, to attend a market at least once a week. For that man, I think, the future holds no good in store. He is apparently doomed to disappear.

Still I believe in this way or in that farming will go on, unless land, or rather its produce, sinks to such a minimum of value that it proves no longer worth the working, even at a rent so reduced as merely to enable its holder to meet his outgoings. Indeed while the farmer finds it possible to make a bare living, it will certainly go on, for in the last resort he can always neglect to pay that rent. Also if the landlord can discover no one who is willing to do as much as this and knows it unprofitable to work his own acres, he will suffer the loss rather than allow them to go out of cultivation.

In truth the position of the owner of land is far worse than that of the farmer of land, since Government and rate-collecting authorities alone allow no rebate, be the times good or bad. Nor do builders, other tradesmen, and all the host who take tithe of the income consider the fact of his poverty when they make out their bills. His case, at any rate in the Eastern Counties and many other places, is in fact lamentable. Among my somewhat extensive acquaintance I can recall no one in Norfolk or Suffolk who is living upon the proceeds of his land; like the new-comers, all who still remain have extraneous means. In short practically they pay a rent themselves for the privilege of occupying a pleasure property, and if they are unable to do this, must let if they can, or sell and go.

The ardent reformer will answer, Let them go. But who is to replace them? The picked, sporting estates will and do find tenants and purchasers, but the bulk of English land does not fulfil the conditions which the new-comers hold essential. Nor indeed do the majority of these rich men, who are pleasure-seekers, fulfil the conditions which are well-nigh vital to the welfare of rural England, wherein (although with many exceptions), taking

the country through, their interest for the most part, is so often purely selfish and personal. Of the old class of English squires established by long descent this could not, I think, be said. Of course, however, there have been and are a few among them whose individual unpopularity and neglect of the obligations of their position gave and give an opening to the enemies of landlordism whereof these are not slow to avail themselves.

Six weeks ago—I write in mid-September—notwithstanding the extraordinary cold and inclemency of the season, it looked as though the crops throughout England would be sufficiently bountiful to ensure some return of prosperity to those who raised them. Unfortunately the prolonged and unseasonable wet has put an end to these hopes. There will still be a considerable bulk of corn, but it must, I think, prove of very inferior quality. I read in the ‘Agricultural Gazette’ for September 8 that ‘there are no corn crops in the south or east of England that have not been more or less injured; for even uncut crops that have not been laid have been weathered, and present a dingy appearance.’ Hops too, it would appear, are largely a failure, fruit and potatoes almost a complete failure, and the Fen cereals so laid that in many instances it is necessary to reap them with an instrument that I have never seen used in my time, the sickle. On the other hand, where it was well secured, hay is plentiful and feed and roots are abundant, though the latter are perhaps not of the best quality.

On the whole, then, it can scarcely be hoped that the British farmer will advance his position in 1902, especially as the ingathering of his grain must prove very costly, and in all the earlier districts, at any rate, much of it has been dragged up and put on stack before it was thoroughly dry. During the last day or two I have employed some of my leisure minutes in watching the steam rise from the ridge of one of my ricks of oats, as though from an altar of sacrifice, and many others are, I understand, provided with similar entertainment. Corn thus heated, I need hardly explain, is

corn practically spoiled, since it must be discoloured and fulsome to the taste.

Another trouble which British owners and tenants of land have to face in 1902 is the very low price of English wheat, which the new Registration Duty, that excited such gloomy forebodings and so loud an outcry among ardent Free-Traders, does not appear to have affected in the least. In an agricultural article in the 'Times' of September 27 appeared a report on this shrinkage in the value of English grown corn, from which I extract the following passage, as it shows the state of the case most clearly.

At the end of August the weekly average price, as calculated upon the returns from the 190 scheduled corn markets of England and Wales, was 31s. 7d. per imperial quarter of 480 lbs. Four weeks later, at the end of September, it has fallen to 26s. 6d. The decline thus amounts really to 5s. 1d., the significance of which will be better appreciated when it is stated that throughout the year 1901 the highest and lowest weekly average prices did not differ by more than 2s. per quarter, whilst in 1900 the difference did not exceed 4s., and in 1899 it was not more than 3s. 8d. It appears, therefore, that within the last four weeks there has been a fluctuation in the weekly average price of home-grown wheat greater in extent than the whole which occurred in any of the three immediately preceding years. Moreover, the current weekly average price of 26s. 6d. per quarter is not only the lowest of the present year, but is the lowest which has been recorded since the beginning of November last.

I may add that according to the 'Market Intelligence' of the 'Agricultural Gazette' for October 13, the returns from 196 scheduled towns in England and Wales show the imperial price of home-grown wheat for the week ending October 11 to have been 25s. 5d. per quarter of 480 lbs, that is, 1s. 1d. lower than its value on September 27. Even now there is nothing to show that the market has touched bottom.

It would seem therefore the most we can expect is that the English farmer will this year maintain his very precarious foothold somewhere near the bottom of the steep

slopes of the Mount of Agricultural Prosperity. Let us hope he will do as much ; it depends upon the weather and the price of food-stuffs.

As I do not wish to take up too much space in setting forth my individual experiences and deductions, whereof perhaps enough are to be found scattered throughout these pages, I cease them here. The general conclusions to which I have arrived from a careful study of the evidence collected on my journeyings, and a statement of the remedies that I think possible, I reserve for the last chapter of this book.

From time to time in these volumes I have expressed my own opinions and those of others on the inequality and injustice of our rating system. I now append the views of one of the greatest authorities on the subject in East Anglia—those of Mr. J. Sancroft Holmes, of Gawdy Hall, Harleston, Norfolk, who for many years has made this complicated matter an object of close study. The reader will, I think, find them well worthy of consideration, and I may say the same about his remarks upon the better housing of the agricultural labourer. Knowing the work on which I was engaged, Mr. Sancroft Holmes kindly wrote the following letter to me in September, 1902.

The system under which imperial taxes and local rates are levied in England is so complex that it is quite impossible, without going into a multitude of details, to state with any degree of completeness the grievance which owners and occupiers of real estate, or lands and houses, have as against the owners of personal or other kinds of property. The inequality and injustice of the present system have been acknowledged time after time by Parliament during the last fifty years, and have in part been met by a variety of grants made from Imperial funds in aid of local expenditure ; but the anomaly still exists that a portion only, and that the lesser portion, of the total wealth of the country contributes to the ever-increasing burden of rates. Whilst in the period 1852–1895 rates in England have risen from £10,000,000 to £32,000,000, grants in aid have only been increased from £500,000 to £7,500,000. This enormous addition of 150 per cent.

in forty-three years to the burden borne exclusively by the lesser half of the country's wealth is a matter of tremendous importance, and calls for most serious consideration. The great fall in the value of agricultural produce during the same period makes it more than ever necessary that an industry the most important in England, if only on account of the numbers it employs, should not be crushed by an antiquated and inequitable system of taxation, which survives only because Parliament has not the pluck or the independence to carry out reforms which it knows are urgently called for.

To make it clear as to what the burdens on agriculture are, they must, whether the rates or taxes are paid by the owner or occupier, be lumped together; they have to be paid out of the produce of the soil, whoever discharges them, and they form a first charge, taking priority over all others. Compare the relative position of two investors with an equal capital, taken from the Report of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation: A, the yeoman, invests in land, houses, and premises of the rateable value of £300, and pays the average rate of 27*d.*—total £33 15*s.*; B, the business man, invests in trade, and owning and occupying shop, house, and premises of the rateable value of £30 pays the average urban rate of 48*d.*—total £6. Although B's rates are nearly double A's, he pays less than one-fifth that A does; if B resides in the same parish as A, his rates would amount to £3 7*s.* 6*d.*, or one-tenth part only. Yet according to the original idea upon which rates were first levied, each investor having an equal capital has an equal ability to contribute towards an expenditure in which he has an equal interest. To make this example applicable to men of smaller means, let A be a peasant proprietor rated on £30, and B a small shopkeeper rated at the like amount. A will pay £3 7*s.* 6*d.*, as against the 12*s.*—or possibly only 6*s.* 8*d.*—paid by B.

Relief to bare agricultural land has recently been given to the extent of one-half of the rates; but the Act is only a temporary one, and may not be renewed. If agricultural land is the staple of the most important industry in this country, how can it be good policy to crush it with burdens in a way to which no other industry is subjected? Why should agriculture as an industry pay a double income tax in the shape of land tax? This piling-up of the burdens on agriculture has been one of the causes of the present grievous depression; it has resulted in this, that capital is no longer attracted to the land as offering a reasonable and safe return.

Those whose capital is locked up in it, unless they have other sources of income, are greatly impoverished, and in many cases ruined. To urge the desirability of creating peasant proprietors without at the same time taking steps to free the land from unjust burdens is futile; poor men or those of small means cannot afford to invest their savings in land under existing circumstances.

Our yeomen, once the pride of every country, are gone—squeezed out of existence, to a great extent, by the inexorable pressure of the tax and rate collector—and in them we have lost a class of men the most expert and valuable in their calling, the backbone of the country, and ready when necessity arose to defend her interests, whether at home or abroad. Their loss is felt, not least, in the administration of local affairs; and socially the yeoman was the link which bound together in one common bond of interest the owner of the soil and the agricultural labourer.

The question of the better housing of the agricultural labourer is one which is purely financial. At the rents currently paid in Norfolk and Suffolk cottages cannot be built, kept in repair, and in such a condition as to meet modern requirements, to pay anything but a trifling return on the capital embarked. Owners of landed property, as a rule, provide excellent cottages and gardens for their labourers at half rents, because such cottages are necessary to attract the best of the men, and because they desire to see their neighbours comfortable and contented. But no capitalist, unless he is a landowner, will build cottages to pay him a precarious 2 to 2½ per cent. Why should he when he can invest his money to so much greater advantage in any other business concern? Cottage rents would have to be doubled at least to make them an attractive investment, and labourers' rents cannot be doubled unless they receive a large increase to their wage, which can only follow a substantial rise in the value of produce. For the country to demand that it shall have supplies of home-grown produce at the lowest possible price, and at the same time to expect that the men who help to create it, and whose living has to depend upon that price, shall have cottage accommodation superior to that which is generally provided on every well-managed estate is unreasonable. Unless the State provides the money—and what Government would venture to raise money for such an unremunerative investment?—it cannot be done. Owing to the very marked decrease in the rural population generally, the poorer class of cottage is rapidly disappearing in East Anglia.

In starving the land the country starves, not only the owner,

regarding whom it is seemingly supremely indifferent (provided he is a man of many acres), but it is impoverishing the occupier and has wiped out the yeoman. Also, whilst it endeavours to get its food supplies at less than cost price in the interests of the towns and manufacturing centres, attempts are made to cajole the labourer into believing that he is inadequately paid, that he is forced to live in a house not meet for his requirements and his means, and that the squire and farmer are his natural enemies. That the labourer as a rule knows better is certain, but that he shows little desire under existing circumstances to change place with his master is due mainly to the fact that the economic conditions under which arable agriculture is now conducted are not such as to encourage him to make the venture.

‘Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.’

The last evidence that I shall quote in this book is that of a gentleman whose opinions, at least where East Anglia is concerned, are entitled to as much weight as those of any agricultural expert in England. Throughout a long life Mr. Clare Sewell Read has not only been a practical farmer, but has made the subject of the land and all connected with it his especial study, and no work of this nature would be complete without an expression of his views. These he has been so good as to give me. In answer to my questions Mr. Read said:—

The rentals of large light land farms and stiff arable land have fallen one half; of small farms about one-quarter; so an average taken over the county of Norfolk would be a reduction of quite one-third. The selling value of arable land has fallen one-half, of grass marshes one-third; the *sporting* value of land has improved and all good ‘shoots’ let readily. The majority of landowners have let their houses and sporting rights to shooting tenants. Small and medium-sized farms with a fair proportion of grass let more readily than they did lately, but there is no advance in rent, while for large farms, especially light and heavy soils, there is still no demand. Hitherto rents have been fairly well paid (being now a small proportion of the outgoings of a farm); how the

rents now due and those at Lady Day, 1902, will be met is more doubtful ; all corn crops in 1901 realised a poor return per acre, and stock are selling badly, while wool was never so cheap.

Labour is more plentiful than it was, but the quality and the quantity get worse every year. Common wages are 12s. and 13s. a week ; with harvest wages and all other extras, for Sunday work, &c., 15s. to 16s. In some districts cottages are scarce and bad ; generally there are several cottages empty in a parish ; labourers object to cottages on a farm, although these were built that they might be close to their work ; they are too lonely.

Most of the smartest young men migrate to the towns, to railways, and into the police. They earn more wages and spend them all. The country is dull, but bicycles make it less so, and are the means of getting easily to work at a distance. Education has certainly done much to depopulate the rural districts, for if a lad cannot read and write and do a sum he is of no use in a town, and what he otherwise learns at school has no reference and no value to country life or farm labour. The tenant farmer is poor, the landlord (who depends upon his land) is poorer still, and the labourer is well employed and well paid.

In the last ten years nine seasons have been dry, yet the corn crops have not been very abundant ; they have been well harvested and could always be sold at market. Should we have wet harvests and lean crops of poor quality, they will be unmarketable, and the result would be the total ruin of many arable farmers. Store stock are generally so dear and of such poor quality that the grazier cannot look for a living profit. Co-operative dairies may have some better chance, and sheep farming may still hold its own, but light arable land must go to semi-permanent grass and heavy ploughed land should be turned into permanent pasture.

I do not believe in peasant proprietorship : small plots of land are still too dear in England to buy, the class likely to occupy them have not the money to purchase, and a

mortgage is the hardest of landlords. But all copyholds should be abolished, and the transfer of small plots of land should be simplified and cheapened.

Where the land is good and friable, with plenty of grass, and near a town or railway station, small-holdings should flourish if occupied by hard-working countrymen. Milk, butter, pigs, poultry, fruit, and vegetables can be produced better than on large farms, while bread, beer, meat, and wool are the natural products of big holdings. The light chalks and sands of Norfolk, the wolds of Lincolnshire, and the downs of Wilts can never pay as small farms; there a scientific, practical syndicate or a rich, enterprising, intelligent tenant may lay farm to farm with more chance of success.

But let everything be done to encourage small-holdings in those districts that are favourable for their development. The struggling peasant on the Continent (who is kept on his legs by import duties and export bounties) manages with cheap railway and sea freights to send us those products which are mostly grown by our small farmer, but with the market at his door the latter might successfully compete with the foreigner. From a national point of view every encouragement should be given to him, and every impediment removed. The small farmer and his family are healthy, hardy, strong, thrifty, and industrious: the boys make handy, all-round labourers, and the girls the best domestic servants. But to succeed 'he must do the work of two labourers and live at the expense of one'; his wife and children must work hard from early dawn to dewy eve; and it is by self-denial therefore alone that he can hope to live and prosper.

I do not know enough of co-operative Banks, or even dairies, to recommend them as adjuncts to small-holdings, but I am sure small farmers cannot make the most of their *butter*, for it is impossible to produce a *prime uniform sample* when you have only two or three cows. Co-operation seems essential for jam-making and *fruit* culture.

To this private expression of opinion by his kind leave I

add an extract from a report on the agriculture of the year from the pen of Mr. Sewell Read, published in the 'Norfolk Chronicle' in December 1901, in which he comments on views expressed by myself in my 'Daily Express' articles, and sets down some very valuable conclusions on the present agricultural outlook. I should explain, if this is necessary, that Mr. Read's opinions as to small-holdings, the desirability of increasing them in suitable localities, and the practical impossibility of so doing where the conditions are not suitable, are very much the same as my own. He is also right in concluding that I do not regard a small registration duty on corn, which, since he wrote, has been imposed by the Government, as in any true sense a measure of Protection.

Small-Holdings.—Mr. Rider Haggard, in his most interesting and practical articles on 'Back to the Land,' sums up in favour of small-holdings, and half suggests that the Imperial Government would be justified in advancing public money for their establishment in some derelict lands. He wisely gives up Protection as at present an impossibility, but restoring the 1s. duty on foreign grain and flour he would not call Protection. But Mr. Haggard knows that on the Continent peasant owners and small farmers are upheld mainly by the aid of import duties and export bounties. In England, near centres of population, around big towns, or near railway stations, where the land is good and a large amount of it is in grass, small-holdings and market gardens should flourish. They may produce milk, butter, pigs, poultry, fruit, and vegetables better than large farms. But the main products of arable land—bread, beer, meat, and wool—can be grown more cheaply and more easily on large holdings. The idea of cutting up the wolds of Lincolnshire, the chalks of Norfolk, or the large sheep-farms of Hants and Wilts into small-holdings is ridiculous. But it is essential for the success of small-holdings that the land should be naturally good and easy of tillage, and then with co-operative dairies the small farmer may live.

The Outlook.—The present agricultural outlook points to a still larger quantity of the worst arable land being turned to some sort of grass. It is startling that within the past thirty years our arable land has decreased 3,500,000 acres, which is equal to the whole area of the three East Anglian counties of Norfolk, Suffolk,

and Essex. Even if worse times are in store for farming, the best of the land in the corn-growing districts of England will still remain under the plough. The expense of working naturally barren lands is greater than tilling deep, loamy soils, and the uncertainty of producing a crop and the cost of extra manure must reduce their rental to prairie value as sheep-walks or sporting ranches, whereas good soils may still command a fair rent. The grass of the light-land districts will probably be stocked with sheep, and heavier soils with young cattle and horses, while medium-sized arable farms will be consolidated into one big holding, worked by the intelligent capitalist or some rich syndicate. It is the tenant of the arable farm of one or two hundred acres who seems most likely to disappear; and more might be said in favour of his continued existence than of the creation of the peasant proprietor. There should be room enough in England for both these classes of cultivators, and, indeed, for all sorts and conditions of farmers. But as long as the country insists upon being fed with grain, meat, and dairy produce from abroad, which can be landed on these shores cheaper than they can be grown at home, it is only the self-denying thrift of the small farmer and the scientific and organised application of the capitalist's money which can stand against the ever-increasing competition of foreign nations and our own colonies.

It is interesting, although I have no space to do so at length, to turn to the observations of other writers on the agriculture of the county of Norfolk. In 1794 Mr. Nathaniel Kent drew up a 'General View' of that subject for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture. Of this work I have been so fortunate as to obtain a copy—the ingenious Author's present to R. Marsham, who, to judge from the notes he has inscribed in the margin, must himself have been an earnest student of the local husbandry.

Like myself he treats of the Holkham Estate, then in the possession of the famous 'Coke of Norfolk,' who afterwards became first Earl of Leicester and the father of the present Earl. Mr. Kent says: 'Holkham Estate . . . has been increased in the memory of man from £5,000 to upwards of £20,000 a year in this county only, and is still increasing

like a snowball Mr. Coke, the present owner of it, is a real friend to agriculture, and justly considered as one of the best landlords in the county.' Then he proceeds to describe from his 'particular knowledge of him' how he 'puts a tenant upon a footing of certainty' by granting him equitable leases and the general advantages of such leases.

Mr Kent, in talking of the price of labour that prevailed 108 years ago, says:—

The standing wages for a labourer in husbandry is now almost generally raised to 1s. 6d. per day in summer and 1s 2d. in winter; and there is no country where the labourer does a fairer day's work. The price of threshing is also fixed to 2s a quarter for wheat and 1s. for barley; and many extra jobs are done by the great, which is always the most pleasant contract between master and man, and the oftener work can be done in this way the better.

Jobs done by the 'great,' I may explain—for I have never heard the term used in my own time—means by piece-work. In the old days the cutting of corn and hay were often said to be undertaken by the 'grate' or great.

Mr. Kent says also that in 1793, when he wrote, the general standards of rents, 'subject to poor rates and tithes,' varied from 20s. to 16s. the acre in the district north and north-east of Norwich; from 18s. to 14s. in the Loddon and Clavering district, which includes Ditchingham; from 14s. to 8s. for the light lands of West Norfolk; and 12s. to 4s. on the blowing sands in the south-west, and from 30s. to 20s. in the Marshland Hundred. The average of the whole county he puts at 14s., which is, I think, quite as high as it is to-day, or, allowing for the difference in the value of money, a great deal higher. Of the corn yields he says: 'I believe the general average crops of the whole county, one year with another, may be estimated as high as three-quarters of wheat and four of barley, and other articles in proportion.' It would appear from this that we have improved our wheat return in the course of the last century, while that of barley remains about the same. Even in

those days there was a game question, for he remarks that although its quantity had decreased 'many of the gentlemen are too tenacious of it, which makes the farmer, its natural guardian, less careful to preserve it; and it is too often a cause of discord in the county.'

It seems strange that Sir James Caird, writing in April 1850, and I, writing in September 1902, should be able to speak of the Holkham property as being held by the same owner. But so it is; for when Sir James wrote the present Lord Leicester had already been eight years in possession of that estate. Indeed this authority devotes nearly half of the short fifteen pages which he was able to give to the great county of Norfolk (for he never seems to have expanded his original letters to 'The Times') to a description of this domain, and of the holdings of various tenants who farmed upon it, but who are now, I suppose, departed.

By the way, Sir James Caird states that in 1850 the wages of Norfolk labourers 'are at present 8s. a week; in some places a reduction to 7s. is spoken of.' It will be seen therefore that these rates were about the same as were in force in the time of Mr. Kent, fifty-six years before. Sir James adds that 'a great proportion of work upon farms, however, is done by task-work or contract, and the rate of wages, therefore, does not afford any correct estimate of the condition of the peasantry.' But Mr. Kent says practically the same thing when he states that, 'many extra jobs are done by the great,' so that it would appear that the Norfolk hind's earnings in 1794 and in 1850 were in fact identical.

Arthur Young, writing in 1771, does not appear to mention Holkham, although of this, in the absence of an index to his works, it is difficult to be certain. He gives, however, a great deal of very interesting information on the condition of Norfolk husbandry in his day. The shift was practically the same as at present—turnips, barley, clover (or clover and rye-grass), wheat—only he puts the turnips first.

Marling was then very largely practised, eighty or a hundred loads being laid on per acre, with from twenty to

thirty-five loads added after the lapse of twenty years. This 'spirited use of marl and clay' has now become a thing of the past, I suppose because of the cost involved, for of its benefit when applied to light land there can be no doubt, and on a very small scale I have made use of it myself. Mr. Young also speaks of the great advantages of leases, which were then becoming common in Norfolk. He says: 'It is absurdity itself to expect that a man will begin his husbandry on your land by expending £3, £4, or £5 an acre while he is liable to be turned out at a year's notice. . . . Had the Norfolk landlords conducted themselves on such narrow principles, their estates, which are raised five, six, and tenfold, would have yet been sheep-walks.'

To-day I do not know which would be the most absurd, to expect a Norfolk tenant to expend £5 an acre upon his landlord's property or to ask him to take a twenty-one years' lease. Certainly, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he would absolutely decline to do either of those things. In these and many other matters times have changed indeed.

Here, regretting that I have not the opportunity of treating of the county in a fuller and more adequate fashion, I must bring my remarks on Norfolk and its agriculture to an end, and with them this record of my investigations into the conditions of those parts of rural England which I visited in the years 1901 and 1902.

Would that I had found them more prosperous!

CONCLUSIONS

So far as the summary of the evidence which I have collected is concerned my task is now ended. In this last chapter, therefore, I propose to submit for consideration the conclusions to which my inquiries in agricultural England have led me, together with some general comments and a statement of the remedies which I feel justified in proposing as palliatives for existing evils. I say palliatives since our political and social conditions do not permit of any royal road leading to a rural Utopia—at least I can find none. The impression left upon my mind by my extensive wanderings is that English agriculture seems to be fighting against the mills of God. Many circumstances combine to threaten it with ruin, although as yet it is not actually ruined.

Of these the chief is unchecked foreign competition. Food can be produced more cheaply in foreign lands than in Great Britain, and, owing to the preferential rates granted by the railway Companies to imported produce, often can be delivered in our markets at a lower cost of carriage than must be incurred to despatch it from one part of England to another. Should this competition become still more acute it will indeed no longer be possible to raise corn and meat at a profit in England. Thus, to take a single instance, the graziers of Leicestershire and other counties have assured me that a further drop of twopence, or even less, per pound in the price of beef would utterly destroy their business; and I believe that much the same may be said with equal truth of mutton, wool, and wheat—namely, that any appreciable fall from present values would make them profitless.

Will such a drop occur? Those who are sanguine-

mind ed answer, No. They believe that foreign countries will fill up and, in an ever-increasing degree, consume their own produce. I hope that they are right, but even supposing that the United States have reached their high-water mark of food export, the facts still appear to point another way. Thus it is said that the agricultural possibilities of much of South America are not yet half opened up and that New Zealand is but making a beginning of its supply of mutton. Further, we are threatened with a fresh competitor in Russia, which is now engaged in developing the resources of her vast Siberian plains. Also it seems probable that, as communications and machinery of various kinds are perfected, ships will bring in products with greater swiftness and certainty, and at even lower rates, than those which prevail at present. Remember that the foreigner has but one market for his superfluous store—the British Isles. Other countries tax his goods.

On the other hand new conditions may arise which will avert these evils. Thus, some fly to bimetallism for refuge, and some, like Lord Walsingham, believe that an increased output of gold might bring salvation. I confess at once, although I may have opinions on these problems, that they are intricate matters of which I do not pretend to speak with any authority. Therefore I leave my views unexpressed. Indeed I doubt whether anyone, however instructed, can be quite sure what would be the exact effect of the universal adoption of bimetallism, which is not likely to occur, or of an unprecedented output of gold that as yet remains unwon.

It is safer to face the position as it is, to deal with what we see and know. For foreign competition, therefore, there is but one obvious remedy—that which is used by all the rest of the world—Protection. But of Protection I repeat what I have said already in these pages: I believe it to be a chimera, even an impossibility, in Britain as Britain is to-day, and that the small, but for revenue purposes most useful registration duty, that has been placed recently upon imported grain and flour will prove the last experiment in that

direction which will be made by any English Government for many a year to come. This duty, it should be remembered also, was imposed, not to assist agriculture—to do which, indeed, it is absolutely insufficient—but to bring money into the coffers of the nation. What may happen in the future, however, we cannot tell. Possibly after some national disaster, too dreadful to contemplate, a starving, broken generation may fly to Protection to save them; but that hour is not with us, and let us hope never will be with us.

As it is, no one can travel about the country, as I have done, with open eyes and ears without learning to understand how our policy of Free Trade and unfettered imports has shot its fibres through every part and organ of the body corporate, till it is in truth no excrescence or addition, but an integral part of our national life. In the end it may kill as a cancer kills, or it may triumphantly vindicate the wisdom of those who interwove it with our policy; that is an issue which can be decided by time alone.

But at present, as I believe, an attempt to drag it forth would result in something very like a civil war. It is, in my opinion, one of the few things for which the people may fight, or go near to fighting. I speak, of course, of protection on foodstuffs. Various industries may demand and obtain defensive duties, and by so doing affect certain classes of the community for good or ill; but this matter of the price of food appeals to every individual in the British Isles who is old enough to reason. It appeals to his pocket, and through his pocket to the welfare and comfort of his body.

Protection must mean dearer food—however small the tax, the middleman would see to that, as has been proved indeed, in the case of the trifling registration duty aforesaid—and dearer food to the vast majority means less food and more work. To escape these things even law-abiding men might shed blood. It may be said that this is not so in other countries; but the answer is that other countries have not had experience of two generations of Free Trade. What the eye does not see the heart does not covet. The mass of

our population lives by trade and through trade. It knows nothing of the land, and is not concerned with the great questions that are wrapped up in its prosperity or ruin.

Who desire Protection? A few thinkers who believe, rightly or wrongly, that it would be for the true welfare of the nation, many farmers, and some landowners. No one else desires it, and perhaps its bitterest opponents would be found among the agricultural labourers, who have never lived so well and cheaply as they do to-day.

My opinion is, therefore, that among the remedies for our agricultural evils the hope of Protection cannot be reckoned. As well might we turn to the illusions of a happy dream to cure some actual work-a-day loss or misery.

The second great danger that threatens English husbandry is the lack of labour, with the comparatively high price and indifferent quality of what remains. As to the conditions of the supply in those counties of which these volumes treat, I must refer the reader to what I have already written. Generally, however, it may be said that the question is most pressing in the south of England, or near to seaport and manufacturing towns, and least so in some of the eastern and more northerly counties. In certain districts, also, labour has been much more plentiful of late owing to the slackness of trade, which has thrown a number of loose hands out of work in the towns or in brick works and building centres.

The real peril both to agriculture and, what is even more important, to the Country at large lies, however, in the fact that the supply is being cut at its source. The results of my inquiries on this point are even worse than I feared. Everywhere the young men and women are leaving the villages where they were born and flocking into the towns. As has here been shown again and again, it is now common for only the dullards, the vicious, or the wastrels to stay upon the land, because they are unfitted for any other life; and it is this indifferent remnant who will be the parents of the next generation of rural Englishmen. It must be remembered that the census returns do not tell the whole truth of

this matter, since very often rural districts include large townships. Also the elderly folk and many young children still remain in the villages, the latter to be reared up at the expense of the agricultural community for the service of the cities. As they mature into the fulness of manhood or womanhood they leave the home and are seen no more.

This is certain—for I have noted it several times—some parts of England are becoming almost as lonesome as the veld of Africa. There 'the highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth.' The farm labourer is looked down upon, especially by young women of his own class, and consequently looks down upon himself. He is at the very bottom of the social scale. Feeling this, and having no hope for the future, now-a-days he does not, in the majority of instances, even take the trouble to master his business. He will not learn the old finer arts of husbandry; too often he does as little as he can, and does that little ill.

Farming in this country is no longer what it was. In all parts of England the land is going more and more to grass, which means, of course, that fewer men are needed for its working; while in many places the tendency is towards the division of farms, until they reach a size that can conveniently be managed by a man with the help of his own children. Also there are always a certain number of tramps or drifters who can be hired, to say nothing of the industrious Irishmen that visit some of the counties in large numbers.

Therefore, great and damaging as is the present dearth of agricultural labour, my own opinion is that more or less it will be met in this way or in that, chiefly by the division of holdings, the increased use of machinery, the abandonment of the higher class of farming and of dairies which necessitate Sunday milking, and the laying away of all but the best lands to grass. In short, the lack of men will not kill our husbandry; it will only change its character for the worse; with the result that much of our soil in the future may produce perhaps one-half of what it used to produce and, say, one-third of what it could be made to produce.

But behind the agricultural question lies the national question. What will be the result of this desertion of the countryside and of the crowding of its denizens into cities? That is a point upon which it would be easy to indulge in strong words. The evils are known, and little imagination is needed to enable a writer to paint their disastrous consequence. I will, however, content myself with a moderate statement. It can mean nothing less than the progressive deterioration of the race. In the absence of new conditions which cannot be foreseen, if unchecked, it may in the end mean the ruin of the race.

Owing principally to the lowness of prices, from whatever cause arising, and the lack of labour, I take it to be proved then that in the majority of districts English agriculture is a failing industry, although at present, in the absence of serious war and want, this gradual failure does not appear materially to affect the general prosperity of the nation. Yet I maintain it is affecting it, not only by the lessening of a home-grown food supply which might be vital in the case of a European struggle, but in an even more deadly fashion by the withdrawal of the best of its population from the wholesome land into cities which are not wholesome for mind or body.

Will this movement stop? Many think so. The hopes of farmers are built for the most part on a belief, which I find to be very widespread, that the trade of the Country is threatened with imminent disaster which will send people back to the land, or at least prevent the migration of any more of them to the towns. For my own part I do not believe that anything short of actual starvation will cause those who have become accustomed to a city life—or, still more, their children—to return to labour on the soil even if they were fitted so to do. It is, however, possible that those who remain on that soil might be prevented from deserting it by the difficulty of obtaining remunerative employment in the towns. As the demand for robust country folk is at present enormous and increasing in every branch of labour—including the army, the railways, and the police—that case

is however purely hypothetical. In this connection it must be remembered that the unemployed, of whom we hear so much, are not strong-limbed, sound-minded rustics, but townsmen of the second or third generation who, whatever else they can do, cannot or will not labour with their bodies. Therefore it comes to this, while there is a demand and trade flourishes the exodus must continue; and at present—with some exceptions—the demand is active and trade does flourish.

The reader may ask, Why should it continue? There are several answers. Chiefly it is a matter of wages. More money can be earned in the towns; and even if this means no real advantage, if the extra cash is more than absorbed in the extra expenses, the average man likes to have the handling of money. He does not think of the rent of the squalid rooms, of the cost of the trams and the music halls; he does not reckon of the time when he will begin to grow old and be pushed out of his place by some new-comer from the land. Yonder it is thirty shillings; here it is only eighteen. That is what he remembers. So he goes to accomplish his destiny, whatever it may be.

But it is not solely a question of wages; he and his wife seek the change and the excitement of the streets. Nature has little meaning for most of them, and no charms; but they love a gas lamp. Nature, in my experience, only appeals to the truly educated. Our boasted system of education seems to make it detestable—a thing to flee from. Lastly, in towns there is a chance of rising; but in the country, for nineteen out of twenty, there is no hope that they will become farmers on their own account. So the countryman chooses the town, and as a consequence the character of Englishmen appears to be changing, not—as those who have observed certain recent scenes, at Waterloo Station and elsewhere, may reflect—entirely for the better.

Before speaking of possible remedies for evils which are generally admitted to exist, I wish to allude very briefly to the condition of those engaged in agriculture as I have

found it to be. Of the three classes connected with the land—the landowner, the tenant farmer, and the labourer—I believe that, taking the country through, the owner has suffered most. In many counties, such as Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk, there is often nothing at all left for him after the various expenses have been met, whereas, if it is in any way encumbered, landed property is as a millstone round his neck. In such counties the possession of land is becoming, or has already become, a luxury for rich men, to whom it is a costly toy, or a means of indulging a taste for sport. Than this no state of affairs can be more unwholesome or unnatural; the land should support men, not men the land. Also there are more acres than there are rich folk to buy them.

In some parts of England, however, the landlords are still living on their rents, but where they have no other resource, in the vast majority of instances they are much crippled. Against this class every hand is raised. If a tenant is pinched, whom does he neglect to pay—the tradesman, the lawyer, the banker? • No, the landlord. If there is trouble about the collection of tithe, on whose shoulders is the burden thrust by Parliament? Those of the landlord. On whom do the death-duties fall the heaviest? The landlord, who cannot discharge them in kind, and often enough has nothing else out of which they may be satisfied. And so forth. Meanwhile the upkeep of estates is costlier than ever it was, since tenants require much in these latter days.

The farmers, with certain exceptions, in my judgment, do no more than make a hard living, and in many instances they are actually losing capital. Still one fact must be remembered which farmers themselves are apt to forget—they do, for the most part, live, and, in comparison with the rest of the world, not at all unpleasantly. They are independent and, where the gentry are few, rule the countryside; moreover with their hire is thrown in a house, which often in a town would cost them at least £50 a year, that must be kept in repair by the owner.

Further their expenses need be but very small, since a farm actually produces much that a farmer's family consumes, and for the most part, they are by no means lavish in their subscriptions, either to public or private objects. These are advantages which are well understood by many townsmen of the shop-keeping and professional classes. It is common to find in some districts that to a considerable extent the demand for farms, especially for small farms, proceeds from such folk who have saved money and desire to end their days in the country. They know that if they make nothing they will actually lose little on, say, a hundred acres of land, of which the buildings must be repaired by somebody else, and that the life is wholesome with many incidental advantages. It is often for these reasons that in most counties there is still a demand for holdings at the present reduced rents. Also farmers can only farm; they have no other resource or occupation, so they cling to their business until the end, whatever that may be, although often enough they would do better to invest their inherited capital and be content to exist upon the interest.

Large holdings, however, which require a great deal of capital, are everywhere becoming hard to let, since, save in very exceptional instances, farmers cannot hope even to do more than pay their rent and make a livelihood. The old days when they could save have gone by; indeed I believe that a great deal of money which was made out of the land in the past is slowly being dissipated upon it in the present.

In short the industry, speaking generally, is decaying; but it still endures, in spite of bad prices, labour troubles, and indifferent seasons. How long it will endure in the absence of some marked change for the better is another question. Such a change the harvest of 1902 with English wheat at less than 25s. the quarter, a price at which it cannot pay to grow, certainly have not produced. That question is one which time alone can answer, but whatever happens doubtless the best lands will always find tenants.

To come to the third class—that of the labouring men—

undeniably they are more prosperous to-day than ever they have been before. Employment is plentiful; wages, by comparison, are high—in some places higher than the land can afford to pay—food and other necessities are very cheap.

In face of these advantages, however, the rural labourer has never been more discontented than he is at present. That, in his own degree, he is doing the best of the three great classes connected with the land does not appease him in the least. The diffusion of newspapers, the system of Board school education, and the restless spirit of our age have changed him, so that now-a-days it is his main ambition to escape from the soil where he was bred and try his fortune in the cities. This is not wonderful, for there are high wages, company, and amusement, with shorter hours of work. Moreover on the land he has no prospects: a labourer he is, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a labourer he must remain. Lastly, in many instances, his cottage accommodation is very bad; indeed I have found wretched and insufficient dwellings to be a great factor in the hastening of the rural exodus; and he forgets that in the town it will probably be worse. So he goes, leaving behind him half-tilled fields and shrinking hamlets.

Moreover, even of those young men who remain but few care to become masters of their work. Here is an instance of which I have just been told, in September, 1902. The Technical committee of the Norfolk county Council allotted to Ditchingham and a group of three or four other parishes, £9 to be given in prizes at a ploughing competition. From the whole parish of Ditchingham with its population of about 1,100 but one man has entered—a servant of my own—and from the group of parishes, I am informed, *not a single lad is forthcoming*, although a sum of £3 was set aside to be given as prizes in the boys' ploughing class. The fact is, of course, that the youth of this, as of other districts, does not wish to learn to plough, even when bribed so to do with prizes, and

that here, before long, ploughmen, or any skilled labourers, will, to all appearances, be scarce indeed.

To sum up the real causes of this ominous migration of the blood and sinew of the race. They are, I take it, first that the peasant has nothing to tie him to the land, on which he is a wage-earner without outlook, secondly, our system of education does not allow him to come in actual contact with that land until he is too old to learn to love it; thirdly, in many cases, proper homes with good gardens are not provided for him in the villages. Up to the seventeenth century I believe that most of the English soil was owned by small yeomen, and even by peasants, who in the beginning acquired it on the condition of the rendering of certain services to a feudal lord, which ultimately were compounded for by a money fine, thus turning them into copyholders. Even the humblest cottager had his four acres of grass or garden about his dwelling.

In time all this was changed: the small-holders were bought out and sank into a condition of great misery, being forced to live like swine, and as labourers to take whatever wage was flung to them. Doubtless they wished to depart in those days, but there was nowhere to go, and no means of going. So they stayed until some thirty years since their eyes were opened.

What will suffice to abate the evil—for it is a great and growing evil? Better wages? In most cases and localities they are impossible unless the prices of farm products alter very materially. Better prospects and cottages? How are these to be provided? I will try to answer the question by the help of the experience which I have gathered. It has been said of me that I am 'a small-holdings man,' that I want 'to cut up England into small-holdings.' Well, I am a strong believer in such holdings, with sundry important limitations. Who would not be when he has found, as undoubtedly I have, of course with exceptions, that wherever small-holdings exist in England there is comparative prosperity, great love of the soil, and a desire to cultivate

it, an increasing as compared with a diminishing population, a large production of children as compared, at any rate, in many instances, with a small production of children, and a considerable addition to the supply of local labour?

But now come the limitations. I desire to state quite clearly I do not believe that small-holdings can be artificially created at this period of our history. The desire and demand for them must spring up among the population; they cannot be forced upon the population with any prospect of success. To take an example, it would be useless for the Government to provide, say, fifty millions of money and bid a Department to create small-holdings to that value. It would only lose most of its money, and in the end find many of the holdings on its hands. Also various districts in England, owing to local conditions of soil, markets, and lack of means of communication, are not suitable to this class of occupier or owner at the present low values of agricultural produce.

Still in every county there are men—more, probably, than any one imagines—who desire small-holdings, who would work them to great advantage to themselves and the State, and, by their example, would encourage others to follow in their steps. Parliament, recognising the existence of such men, has, it is true, already passed an Act—the Small-Holdings Act of 1892—designed to assist them. But the administration of that law has been left in the hands of the county Councils, who, with the exception of those of Worcestershire, of Cambridgeshire on a very small scale, and, I think, of one other county—at least I know of no others—have allowed its excellent provisions to become a dead letter. Unless, therefore, the Councils can be moved to take action, or the administration of the Act is transferred to the Board of Agriculture—a course which would have some disadvantages—for all practical purposes it may be regarded as non-existent.

How, then, can these men be helped? By direct Government aid? I think not. Such aid pauperises and is foreign to our character and traditions. Indirect aid, which enables

the individual to help himself, is another matter. I propose that it should take this form. First, the extension of the provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890, to enable public Bodies and landowners to borrow money from the Treasury, to whatever extent they may wish, for the erection of both cottages and farm buildings sufficient for the purposes of small-holdings, at a more reasonable rate of interest than is at present charged by the Loan Commissioners. Such interest to be repayable over a term of sixty instead of forty years, as at present, and to include a provision for a sinking fund which would automatically extinguish the debt at the termination of that period. As it is, the great majority of landowners are absolutely unable to afford to put up cottages and outbuildings, even when they so desire, without which, small-holdings can seldom be multiplied.

But it is undoubtedly to the interest of the nation that these should be multiplied, and still more so that the cottage accommodation of the working classes in rural districts should be improved. Surely it would not be beyond the resources, of financial experts to formulate a scheme under which the necessary funds might be forthcoming without actual loss to the Treasury, or, at the worst, at a loss so small that it should not be allowed to weigh against the advantage gained.

Of course I know the answer—that owing to the cost of our wars the Government itself must pay about three per cent. for money. If this is held to be conclusive there is nothing more to be said. Still I wish to point out that when millions are so easily forthcoming for enterprises of the character of the Uganda Railway, which is not likely to prove a remunerative investment, or to assist Boers, who have brought their troubles on their own heads, it is hard that help should be withheld from such home schemes as I have suggested on the ground that, commercially, they might not pay.

But, it may be said, supposing that the Government were to make such advances, where is the little farmer's working capital to come from? Is the Government to lend him that also? This is not my notion. Some of it he must find

out of his own means or savings ; the rest he should be able to borrow, not from the Government, but from co-operative Credit Banks, to be established and controlled by the Board of Agriculture, working, perhaps, in conjunction with, or through the existing co-operative Banks Association. Of these banks I have treated in my chapter on Lincolnshire, so I will only add here that personally I am convinced of their utility and great possibilities. I believe firmly, that under proper and sympathetic management they might prove a very powerful factor in the resurrection of the departed class of British yeomen, and therefore in keeping population on the land. The splendid work they have done on the Continent is known to all. Why should it not be repeated in England ?

Still such Banks would need a powerful and authoritative start, and that start, I submit with humility, should be given by the Government, acting through the Board of Agriculture. Some money might be wanted at the beginning, possibly half a million ; but if we may judge by the Continental experience, given good direction there is little fear that one halfpenny of this advance would be lost to the Treasury. From these Banks deserving men, whom their fellows approve and are responsible for, could borrow on the well-known and tested system, with the result, I am convinced, that numbers who now have no means of so doing would be able to establish themselves as small farmers. Not many, it is true, could buy their land ; that, where it was desired, might come later with their success.

Indeed, although I should like to see the land in more hands than it is at present, I think that in England the small-holder is, on the whole, better off as a tenant than as an owner. In the first case his capital is all available to stock his farm, and though an owner is free from rent, too often, as I have shown in this work, he has to meet a heavier burden in the shape of interest on money borrowed upon the security of his freehold. This subject might be written of at much greater length, but I leave it here.

Before doing so, however, I wish to make it quite clear that I do not desire that all England should be cut up into these little tenancies or ownerships (as once much of it must have been), since England is large, and in it there is room for every kind of estate and holding. I do, however, desire to see small-holdings indefinitely multiplied, for they produce a splendid class of men, of which soon the Country is likely to be much in need. Moreover it looks very much as though ere long there may be but two payable classes of farming. (1) That which is worked by capitalists on a large scale, with the aid of machinery for arable, and of great herds of stock for pastoral lands: (2) That which is worked by the small-holder on suitable land and in the near neighbourhood of markets, with the aid of his own hands and family.

Of this, at least, I am almost sure. Men will not return from, they will not even cease to go to the towns, in order to become day labourers on the land. But they will, in many instances, cling to that land if their lives there can be made more pleasant, especially if they can be given the interest of property in or on its acres. In short, they will do for their own what they will not do for another's, even though the actual gain be small and the life hard. So, at least, I have found it in many places.

There remains the question of rural education. It is generally admitted—myself I have heard it from the mouths of many competent witnesses, as readers of this book will know—that our present system is a town system, and tends to turn people to the towns. Agricultural classes have, it is true, been introduced, with lessons in botany and other expedients, but, as I gather, with small appreciable effect. The lad who is expected to deal with the land and with animals ought to become practically acquainted with them before he is twelve years old, otherwise, in the great majority of cases, he will dislike the one and fear the other. How then is this to be effected? The answer is, as in the case of the credit Banks, by going abroad for an example.

In various Continental countries—also, I believe, in some

of the Australasian Colonies—I understand that the school children are allowed out to work on the land in summer and kept to their books in winter. Why cannot this system, with whatever local modifications may be found necessary, be adopted in England? Some may reply—Because the Country does not wish its youth to be kept in the rural districts; it desires that they should be attracted to the towns, there to supply cheap labour. If that is so, here, again, nothing more can be said, except that in the opinion of many this is the shortest road to national disaster.

I urge with all earnestness that the matter is one which needs impartial investigation. Educational theories may be pushed too far, especially when the theorists and the teachers are townsfolk unacquainted with the needs and conditions of the land, and quite careless or ignorant of the ultimate issues of its impoverishment and depopulation.

So far I have dealt with those remedies that might help to keep folk in the country; but it may justly be asked what I have to propose to benefit agriculture at large. Protection being, in my opinion, out of the question, I can only answer: Nothing that is new, startling, or revolutionary. Garden cities are very good in theory, but would, I fear, prove too expensive, and be opposed also by the large manufacturers and employers of labour. The building of a New Jerusalem never has been and never will be an easy task. Land Nationalisation and similar wild expedients may, so far as my judgment goes, be set aside as utterly impracticable. Even if they, or any of them, could be carried out on an honest basis—and nothing that is not honest will prosper—there can, I imagine, be no worse landlord than the State.

There are things that might be done, however, if only Parliament could be persuaded to do them. Thus, the incidence of rates might be equalised in the case of real and personal property. But beyond appointing a Royal Commission on Local Taxation, which has sat for about six years, our rulers still steadily refuse to face this problem. True we have the

Agricultural Rating Act, which gives some relief for another three years, after which, if a Liberal Government happens to be in power, probably it will be allowed to lapse. Its adversaries call it a dole, and it has something of that appearance.

But the landed interests—which are, I repeat, after all among the most vital and real interests of Britain, since the best of its population is, and always has been, bred upon the land, and men are more than money—do not want a dole. They want justice; they desire that the matter should be settled with equity. What is ascertained and admitted to be right they are prepared to pay without complaint. Why cannot a Government with a great majority take this matter up and settle it once and for all?

What remains? To deal with the question of the abolition of Copyholds in some easy and reasonable fashion; with the question of the cheapening of land transfer; with the question of the multiplication of light railways and other methods of communication, of which I shall speak presently; with the question of the branding of foreign meat, or of making it in some other way, such as by the imposition of very heavy fines, impossible that it should be sold fraudulently as British-grown; with the question of preferential railway rates; with the question of the promotion of co-operative Associations, especially for the manufacture of butter, and other such matters.

None of these things are impossible. What is needed is the will to grapple with them on the part of those who have the power. Alas! there seems to be no will. Here the fact of the dominance of cities is omnipotent. The statesmen are few who, with the true interest of their Country at heart, would dare to risk the wrath of the inhabitants of towns, from whom they might suffer at the next election, by attempting acts of justice to the land whereof these did not approve. Unfortunately, also, any suggested reform in connection with rural England is apt to be considered more from the standpoint of party politics than from that of

national advantage. What one party suggests the other opposes. So it well may happen that nothing will be done; that things will be left to drift as they were left to drift in the case of South Africa; with results that are now painfully patent to all, and especially to a few of us, among whom I may number myself, who foresaw and foretold them years ago as they are being left also in the matter of our home food-supply, whereof the issue will doubtless become plain in the fulness of time.

Still I am bold enough to ask—even to implore—those who have the opportunity, to give some real and earnest attention to the state of our English land and of the agricultural interests of the Country, also to that of the rapid and increasing shrinkage of the purely rural population. Indeed these are not things that should be thrust aside as of no account. They are of the very greatest account, and generations to come will bear witness that my words are true, for in them are concerned nothing less than the future welfare of Great Britain. The Englishmen of the past were land-dwellers, and their deeds are written large in history. If through the neglect or the indifference of this age they are to become city-dwellers, what will the history of coming centuries have to tell of them?

Few study these dull, slow-fruited problems, and theirs are but voices crying in the wilderness which echo slowly into emptiness and silence. Well, if so, so it must be. Yet it is sad to see the tide of ruin creeping over so much of the land of England, and the people turning their backs on the villages where their forefathers have dwelt for generations, when it would be easy, at any rate, to unfold the hands and to attempt some remedy. For instance, the President of the Board of Agriculture might be something more than a compiler of labour statistics, an officer for the enforcement of regulations as to diseased cattle, a disseminator of useful information about beetles, and a peripatetic utterer of speeches at Agricultural Shows which are reported in paragraphs upon the outer sheets of newspapers. Why

is not this Minister given the power of the other great Officers of State? Why cannot he start Credit Banks, organise co-operative Societies, inaugurate reforms, and, backed by the Cabinet, carry them through Parliament, as do his fellows in office? Mr. Hanbury, so far as I can judge from his published utterances, has the interest of his Department very much at heart, and is earnestly desirous of furthering its usefulness. I suggest that the muzzle should be taken off Mr. Hanbury; that he should be allowed to act; that he and his successors should be recognised as serious personages, with most vital work to do; and that those problems and questions which are connected with the rural population and with the land of England, which may one day be found to be of a great deal more importance to us than we judge at present, should receive their fair share of attention from Parliament—let us say a sixth of that which is annually accorded to the affairs of Ireland.

I gather that Mr. Hanbury himself is much of my opinion in these matters. At least on Sept. 11, 1902, he was present at the Wirral Agricultural Show, where, in the usual compressed paragraph, he is reported to have spoken as follows:—

The President of the Board of Agriculture, speaking at the luncheon, advised farmers to organise and make themselves heard for in Parliament hitherto they had not had the attention paid to them which so great an industry deserved. They ought to combine against any Government that did not do its best to help them against railway companies and canal companies, which carry goods at rates far too high for the small farmers. They ought also to combine against adulteration and fraud of every description. At the same time it would be a bad day for this country if it had to depend for its food supply on the food brought from across the seas.

Certainly it is both amusing and instructive to find the President of the Board of Agriculture compelled by his conscience to counsel farmers to combine against any Government that does not do its best to protect them from

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To recapitulate, then, as one who has made an earnest and prolonged study of these questions, on behalf of the thousands who think as I do, I ask six things of the Government, not only in the interests of rural England, but of Great Britain as a whole—

1. That it will extend the provisions of the Housing of the Working Classes Act in some such fashion as is suggested above.

2. That it will place a minimum sum of half a million at the disposal of the Board of Agriculture to be, as regards one moiety, loaned out by the said Board to co-operative Credit Societies working under its control or supervision, in order to enable them to start, or to extend their operations. As regards the other moiety, to be employed for the advance of moneys upon such terms as may be found safe and reasonable, to be used in the establishment in suitable places of co-operative milk and butter Factories.

3. That in view of the very serious state of affairs revealed by the report of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation, and the ever-increasing burden which is being heaped on real property that grows daily less able to bear it, the Government will at once introduce legislation to enforce the conclusions of the said report. This might be done by charging sums spent on account of the nation to the nation at large, instead of leaving them to be borne to the extent of, I believe, over eighty-two per cent. by the owners and occupiers of real property.

4. That it will deal with the questions, among others, of the abolition of Copyhold and of the cheapening of land transfer.

5. That it will greatly strengthen the powers and position of the Board of Agriculture and its President.

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4. That it will deal with the questions, among others, of the abolition of Copyhold and of the cheapening of land transfer.

5. That it will greatly strengthen the powers and position of the Board of Agriculture and its President.

6. (By far the greatest and most far-reaching of the remedies that I have to propose.) *That so soon as may be feasible it will establish an Agricultural Post, to be worked as a branch of the present Post Office, and as nearly as proves practicable upon the lines of the existing Parcel Post.* Packages to be carried by this post not to exceed 100 lb. in weight until the scheme is further developed in a way of which I shall speak presently. All classes of agricultural goods however, including milk in churns, to be conveyed by the said Post at the lowest rates that are found possible without loss to the Country. Should the experiment prove both useful and self-supporting, as I am convinced that it would ultimately do, it might in the future be much extended so as to deal with goods in bulk by means of traction-trains which would collect the said goods at local receiving stations and deliver them in the large towns, or at any other receiving station.

Such traction-trains, I believe, could be worked very economically. Thus Mr. B. J. Diplock has invented a new traction engine running on substitutes for ordinary wheels that he calls 'pedrails,' which, it is said, after allowing for depreciation, repairs, other expenses, &c., will transport goods at seventy-five per cent. less than the rates commonly charged by English railways. For the details of what seems to me, after inspecting the models, to be a very remarkable invention, I must refer the reader to Mr. Diplock's recent book, 'A New System of Heavy Goods Transport on Common Roads' (Longmans). Whether or no this scheme will prove a commercial and practical success of course I cannot say; but even if it does not, without doubt others will appear. My point is that eventually an Agricultural Post such as I propose, might by the aid of road traction be so extended as to deal with produce in bulk.

Mr. Hanbury said in the speech which I have quoted that farmers 'ought to combine against any Government that did not do its best to help them against railway Companies.' But is not Mr. Hanbury a little hard on Governments in

this particular? All of us know the injustice of preferential rates, which the railways are so glad to give to foreign produce that otherwise would go to some different port and be carried by a rival line, and have asked for redress against them. In my own case, I admit that I have done so, greatly doubting whether any help of this nature will ever be obtained, principally because it lies almost beyond the power of an English Government to accede to such a prayer. To do so would affect the moneyed interests, by which this land is really ruled, too sharply; also it is difficult to prevent railways from making their own bargains. These are in no respect philanthropic associations, but business Companies which exist in order to earn as high a dividend as possible for the benefit of their shareholders; after all a legitimate end. It is probable indeed that the railway Corporations would one and all watch the utter extinction of British agriculture with cheerfulness, if thereby they could earn an extra two per cent. on their ordinary stock. It would seem, therefore, whatever may be the true reading of the law of the matter, that it is useless to hope to coerce them into charity.

But there exists another and a better way—to compete with them. Now such a Post as I suggest, especially if it were combined with a system of road traction, would prove a very effective form of competition, of which as business people the railway Companies could not in the least complain. Doubtless they would try, however, to kill it by a temporary reduction in their rates, for which reason, among others, it is necessary that it should be a venture of the Government, which alone could bear the strain of such initial rivalry. I hope that it may be adopted, and with the greatest earnestness, I beg all who, directly or indirectly, from personal or from national motives, are interested in the land of England to support me in my petition to Government to give it a fair trial.

One of the greatest obstacles with which the little farmer, the small-holder, and indeed all agriculturists have to contend, is the impossibility of delivering their produce in markets that are eager for it, because of the overwhelming

difficulties of collection and delivery, and the overwhelming charges of its transport. The other day in my own garden I saw some hundreds of particularly fine Cos lettuces which were beginning to bolt, that is, go to seed. I told the gardener that he had better sell them, to which he replied that there was no local market, and that they would not pay to send away by train. If an Agricultural Post had existed those lettuces might have been delivered on the following morning in Yarmouth, Lowestoft, or London, where they would have fetched a good price. As it was they rotted or were thrown to the pigs. This, of course, is but one very insignificant instance out of thousands, since the case applies to every sort of agricultural produce that is grown in small quantities, and more especially to fruit.

I can well foresee the answer which will be made to this appeal, that it would give a great deal of trouble—especially to officials—and cost much money to inaugurate such a Post, which must necessitate extra buildings, additional horses and carts, and more men to handle the stuff. As regards the first of these objections, if they are paid for it surely people can be found who would not mind the trouble. As regards the second, my retort is that I believe in the end it would pay the Country well, as the Penny and, I imagine, the Parcel Posts have paid. Further, even if some loss were incurred at first, seeing that the benefit which must result would, I am sure, be the establishment of thousands of small-holders and the increased prosperity of many who already exist, and of the land and agriculture at large, I urge that the possibility of such a loss should not be allowed to kill the scheme. Let us say that the cost of its promotion amounted to that of one Uganda Railway. If so, why, for once in a way, should not rural England have the same benefit of the experimental investment of money as is freely granted to savage Africa?

With these remarks I leave my scheme for the creation of an Agricultural Post, of which I am, I confess, personally an ardent advocate, to the consideration of my readers and the public.

In the foregoing chapters I have treated of the agricultural conditions of many counties in detail; but perhaps before leaving the subject I may be allowed to add a few remarks upon its general aspects. The position as regards the production of wheat, which remains, and always must remain, the foundation of our food supply, cannot be better summed up than in the words used in the 'Agricultural Returns for Great Britain' for 1901, published by the Board of Agriculture in 1902. 'The diminution by 144,000 acres, or nearly eight per cent., of the area under wheat in Great Britain, followed upon similar losses of 156,000 acres and 101,000 acres respectively in the two years immediately preceding. This reduced the acreage practically to the level of 1896, a year in which, with the single exception of 1895, the smallest breadth of wheat land was recorded in Great Britain.'

Also there was a reduction of 18,000 acres in the barley area, a reduction of 29,000 acres in the oat area, a reduction of 24,000 acres in the turnip and swede area, a reduction of 16,000 acres in the mangold area, and a reduction of nearly eight per cent. in the cabbage, Kohl-rabi, and rape area. On the other hand there was an increase of nearly 16,000 acres in the potato area, of 97,000 acres in the clover, sainfoin, and rotation grasses area, and of 107,000 acres in the permanent pastures area. The total extent of land that produced crops and grass in 1900 and did not produce them in 1901 appears to be about 20,000 acres. This, although a bad symptom, is not in itself so very large a loss, but it must be remembered that the transference of a great acreage of ground from the production of cereals, and of roots that are used for fattening beasts, means that the food-producing power of the country is still further decreased.

Now I believe that our annual consumption of wheat is about 32,000,000 quarters, of which some 24,000,000 quarters are imported at a cost of nearly £40,000,000; also that another £40,000,000 or so is paid away to the foreigner for butter, poultry, eggs, vegetables, cheese, fruit, &c., to

say nothing of the enormous sums expended in live and dead foreign meat. In short we seem to lay out about £4 per head of the population on imported food, as against, to quote an example by way of contrast, about 7s. per head of its population paid by Germany. These at least I understand to be the results arrived at by Sir James Blyth.

To me, in face of the continued decrease in our agricultural output, these figures are simply terrifying, since, although the question is one into which I do not propose to enter here, I am convinced that the risk of the starvation which might strike our Country in the event of a European war, is no mere spectre of the alarmist. It should be remembered that fleets of battleships, even if they could keep the great seas as open as is cheerfully supposed, can never control the operations of the foreign, and indeed of the home speculators in foodstuffs. Within a fortnight of the declaration of such a war—which we must expect some day—corn would, I believe, stand at or near 100s. a quarter. If we could think that the War Office was ready to meet such an emergency—to supply food, allay panic, &c., perhaps there would not be so much cause for alarm. But what intelligent person who has studied the action of that Department during our recent troubles—in the matter of the supply of horses, for instance—can conscientiously expect anything of the sort?

Still the reader may say—Where is the use of writing of dangers that cannot be helped? We must import our foodstuffs, keep up our navy, and take our chance. But is this altogether true? That it is true to a certain extent nobody disputes. An article was published in the 'Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society' for 1900, from the pen of Mr. R. F. Crawford, in which he calculates that to grow the amount of foodstuffs which we import would require the cultivation of another 23,000,000 acres yielding our present average returns. Of course in the total area of the United Kingdom, which amounts to 77,671,000 acres, whereof about 47,800,000 are under cultivation, this extra land is not avail-

able. But might not the produce of those 47,000,000 ~~and~~ odd acres be very largely increased by better cultivation?

Mr. Crawford appears to doubt it, but I confess he does not at all convince me. Various instances of such increased productiveness under the influence of good farming occur to my mind, whereof I shall quote only one. I allude to that which I have given of the case of a little tenant at my own gate. This man, I think without the aid of any artificial manure, except perhaps soot, obtained not from spade husbandry, but under the usual four-course system, and from a field of no better quality than the rest of the farm, results, especially in wheat, infinitely larger than I have been able to do, chiefly, as I believe, because, like other farmers, I do not use sufficient manure. Many authorities also, some of them quoted in these pages, are of my opinion that the present output of the land could be very largely augmented. However this may be, the sad thing is, at any rate in thousands of examples, that owing to the inadequacy of the capital which is put into it, the quantity of its produce is absolutely lessening.

Moreover, because of the unremunerative price of wheat, tens of thousands of acres have been withdrawn from its cultivation—indeed, Free Trade has sent down the corn area enormously. Whether or no their yield of that cereal could be profitably increased, as I and others firmly believe to be the case, we cannot get over the fact that our wheat acreage is now less than half what it was in 1857, and, perhaps with some temporary fluctuations, will, it is probable, continue to diminish. Surely when its full meaning is apprehended this is a most serious circumstance for a nation to be called upon to face.

When we turn to live stock the story is much the same, as it appears that in 1901 the number of cattle in Great Britain was reduced by 41,000 head, the number of ewes by 188,000, to which must be added 111,000 in 1900, or a total of about 300,000 for the two years. Of pigs also there was a loss of 202,000, the number of these animals 'standing at a lower level than in any year since 1893.' As regards

horses. I quote the following figures given by Sir Walter Gilbey, one of the leading authorities on that subject in England. Speaking at the Hackney sale at Bishop Stortford on September 17, 1902, Sir Walter said —

He was sorry he was unable to give them anything like satisfactory figures in regard to horse-breeding in England, which he could only describe as being in a deplorable state. He did not wish to alarm them, but Government returns showed a state of things in England at the present time which were very disheartening. It appeared that in ten years, from 1863 to 1873, we imported into this country 29,000 horses, while in the ten years from 1891 to 1901 we imported no less than 342,000 horses. Those were startling figures enough, but what was even more alarming was the fact that the horse-breeding business was getting worse every six months.

The comment of the Board of Agriculture report on these figures (excluding those given by Sir Walter Gilbey) is 'the returns of the number of live stock on the agricultural holdings of Great Britain on June 4, 1901, were disappointing as showing a general diminution, and indicating therefore to that extent a decrease of farmers' capital.'

So it is. The farmers' capital is decreasing, and little or no other replaces it on to the land. Upon this question the Duke of Argyll writes to me: 'The main point in this matter seems to me to be the question how best to induce capital to settle on the land. Labour leaves it at present for the towns because capital is discouraged. I leave out of view "fancy" places or properties that may attract capitalists because they can "cut up well" for towns, or because they are too remote from towns to be raided by "trippers," or afford sport. There are fancy places that will always command fancy prices. But for the ordinary humdrum country what can attract capital and therefore labour to it? The panacea of many is to "make hay" of the remaining landlords and compel them to sell. But this will drive away a certain amount of capital without bringing any in unless the smaller landlords, induced thereby to come, bring capital

with them. This cannot be expected to happen in any dull country. The present farmers who might become landlords with or without State help would certainly not replace the capital driven away. Death duties by allowing landlords eight instead of one year to pay off the taxes have not spared them, because the taxes imposed on land are a capital value which cannot be realised by sale, and men cling to ownership though only nominal, and cut down employment still further. Taxes should be on actual income only of land, and not on capital and "aggregate" or imaginary values.'

In a subsequent letter the Duke writes 'I think you would find the German land-bank system well worth study . . . Encouragement to spend money on land can only be given by showing men that the money so spent will not be confiscated. The State by loans and the encouragement of Credit Banks could get as good interest for the money spent in breeding confidence as from any other investment.'

These views strike me as very sound, and not least in so far as they concern Credit Banks, of which, as the reader will know, I am a strong advocate. But how can it be expected that capitalists will be found to invest in anything connected with British land when it is known that, outside of the possible pleasure interest, they can scarcely expect to receive a return for their money?

The truth is that after some years of experience and investigation, I am driven to the conclusion that the agricultural industry in England is as steadily going down hill as the capital sums invested in it are wasting; that the owners of the soil are becoming impoverished; that the farmers are at best making no headway, and, owing partly to poverty and partly to the natural discouragement that results from continual non-success, are losing heart and enterprise. They work on, but they work like tired men who may hope for better things, but do not expect them.

Writing half a century ago Sir James Caird said on behalf of himself and his colleague: 'We feel that we may speak with confidence and hope of the future. We rise

from our task . . . with the firm persuasion that, though there are many exceptions, the great body of the landlords and tenants of England have, by mutual co-operation, energy, and capacity sufficient to meet and by degrees to adapt themselves to a change which in its extraordinary effect on the welfare of all other classes of the community will sooner or later bear good fruits also to them.'

The 'change' to which he alludes in these, the last words of his book, is that from Protection to Free Trade whereof, I believe, Sir James Caird was an ardent advocate. Not often has a prophecy been more completely refuted by the inexorable argument of fact, or at the least the good fruits that were to come 'sooner or later' show no signs of arrival in 1902, more than fifty years after he put this deliberate opinion upon record. Whatever Free Trade may have done for the Country at large—and I maintain that of this matter we do not as yet know all the truth—it is certain that it has brought the land and the agriculture of England very near to the brink of ruin. The destruction which the opponents of this far-reaching revolution foretold for these was, it is true, postponed a while owing to the introduction of steam and other causes, but it has fallen at length. Surely of those prophets it may be said that Wisdom is justified of her children. Free Trade has filled the towns and emptied our countryside; it has gorged the Banks but left our rick-yards bare. Whether this result is one to be desired it is not for me to say, still I may be allowed my own opinion on the matter.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey
Where wealth accumulates and men decay

wrote Goldsmith long ago. Nor have his words lost their weight.

I think there exists an ever-growing tendency to overlook the very elementary facts that the natural condition is better than the artificial condition—that after all men and women sound in body and equal even if slow in mind, are of more importance to a country than any material wealth. Wealth,

when all is said, is only an appanage useless in itself, and the productive of a greatness liable to very quick decay. • The healthiest and the happiest nations are not, I believe, and never have been the richest nations reckoned merely in pounds sterling. Indeed riches in excess, especially if unevenly distributed, in more instances than one, have proved the ultimate solvent of their prosperity. This in its true sense, is rather to be found among those peoples of whom a very large number from generation to generation have been content by pure and honest toil, to win a sufficient if a humble sustenance from the earth that bore them

When we turn to the question of the decrease in the inhabitants of English rural districts, it is to find ourselves confronted with some startling figures. I read that in 1851 the agricultural labourers of England and Wales numbered 1,253,800 and that in 1891 they had shrunk to about 780,700. What the census of 1901 shows their number to be I do not yet know, but I shall be much surprised if it records any advance. Taking it on the 1891 basis, however, it would seem that whereas between 1851 and 1891 the population of England and Wales had increased by about a half, its agricultural inhabitants during this same period had actually decreased by over one-third, with the result that whereas in 1891 the urban districts could show a total of about 25,000,000 people, the rural districts held only about 7,500,000, that is some 23 per cent. of the population, as against 77 per cent. living in towns or their immediate neighbourhood. These figures are very eloquent and very ominous, especially if a careful analysis of those of the last census should prove them to be progressive in the same directions.¹

In days that are quite recent, as the remarkable Necton document quoted in my chapter on Norfolk shows, folk were

¹ Since the above was written I read in a prospectus issued by 'The Small-Holdings Association Ltd.' that 'It will be found on examining the census returns (for 1901) that there are decreases in the population in no less than 401 of our rural districts, and that in many cases the decrease has exceeded 1,000 persons.'

haunted by an absolute terror of the over-peopling of the rural districts. Now they suffer from a very different fear. The plethoric population-bogey of 1830 has been replaced by the lean exodus-skeleton of 1902. People are deserting the villages wholesale, leaving behind them the mentally incompetent and the physically unfit; nor, at any rate in many parts of England—although in this matter East Anglia is perhaps better off than are most other districts—does the steady flow to the cities show signs of ceasing. Yet—and this is one of the strangest circumstances connected with the movement—those cities whither they go are full of misery. Disease, wretchedness, the last extremes of want, and the ultimate extinction of their families will be the lot of at least a large proportion of these immigrants. Has not this been shown by Mr. Rowntree and others?

On the other hand, low as the wages are, it is not too much to say that in the country, or at least in that large area of it with which I am acquainted, there is in practice but little real poverty. Cases of misfortune there are, and always must be, together with cases of accidents and cases—of these a great number—where the drunkenness or other ill-behaviour of the breadwinner has brought whole families to wreck. But want, actual want of food for the stomach, of clothing for the back, and of shelter for the head, such as stalks abroad through the poorer parts of great cities, is rare to-day in rural England. There too those who for this cause or for that fall into its clutches can generally find a friend to help them, in nine cases out of ten the despised parson or the much-abused squire.

I know no better test of well-being than the appearance of the children of a locality. Now I venture to assert that any observer who stood at the gates of Ditchingham School, or of those of some neighbouring parish, and watched the pupils coming out to play, would find them as well and sufficiently clothed, as well fed, and in general of as happy and healthy an appearance, as it is possible for children of their class to be. If, however, he took the train to some great

city and repeated his observations at the door of a large Board school, would he be able to say as much? In short, even for the very poorest, life in the country has not those horrors that in towns must be its constant companion. We complain, and rightly, of the state of our cottages; but after all, how many cases of consumption are there in them and how, for young or old, do the rural tables of mortality compare with those of towns? Is it possible in a village for such a thing as this to happen? A lady known to the writer was district-visiting, I think in London, and in a tenement of one room found a woman nursing some children sick with I forget what complaint. Presently this poor creature opened the door of a cupboard and showed her the bodies of two more of her offspring which she had thrust away thus because there was nowhere else to put them!

Still for such homes as these, and perhaps to fates as dreadful, people flock from their wholesome, happy villages, where their labour at least brings health and in most cases sufficiency, to the towns where they believe that they are certain of higher wages and more amusement. A while ago I met a man, evidently an agricultural labourer, walking down the Strand and literally weeping. It appeared on investigation that he had come up with his family from some rural district in the hope of 'bettering' himself. The result was that at the time of our meeting he and they were learning by sharp experience the meaning of the word starvation. I have often wondered what became of that man, or if he took my advice to get him back to the country as quickly as he might.

But, as I have said, such examples do not deter those who want to go, who are young and strong and forget the day when they will be grey-headed and turned from door to door. They think that they will be among the fortunate; that they will not find themselves sick and friendless in the ward of a London hospital; that their children will develop no disease in the crowded slums. Or perhaps they do not think even so much as this. They are weary of their lack of

outlook and of working the fields that their forefathers worked before them for hundreds of years, and do not reflect that in this pursuit, humble as it seems, there is in truth great dignity; weary also of the control of village opinion and of the dulness of village life. Education has taught them to dislike manual labour, which they look down on; while newspapers, and friends who have been successful there, tell them of the glories and high wages of the town, of the music halls and the beautiful processions.

So they go and it is hard to blame them. But what will be the result upon England at large—indeed what is the result already? Again I ask, can it be denied that the national temperament is undergoing modifications subtle perhaps, but none the less profound? To ‘maffick’ is a very modern verb, but one of which the significance is daily widening. Moreover, the physique deteriorates. This was a fact that came home to any who, after the country-bred yeomen were exhausted, took the trouble to compare with them the crowds of town-reared men that presented themselves at the London recruiting offices to volunteer for service in South Africa. The intelligence too is changed; it is apt no longer to consider or appreciate natural things, but by preference dwells on and occupies itself with those more artificial joys and needs which are the creation of civilised, money and pleasure-seeking man.

I am convinced—and this is a very important national aspect of the question—that most of our reverses during the recent war were due to the pitting of town-bred bodies and intelligences, both of officers and men, against country-bred bodies and intelligences. We laugh at the Boer for his rude manners and his rusticity, but therein lies a strength which if he and his people are wise they will not exchange for all the gold and gems in Africa and all the most exquisite refinements of Europe. If they can resist those temptations (which for our sake it is to be hoped that they will not do); if they can continue to be content to live roughly upon their farms and produce as many children

as nature gives them, then I am sure—unless we British change our ways—that whatever flag flies over it, within two generations its inhabitants of Dutch blood will, in fact, rule South Africa. Moreover, having that vast country in which to develope, within ten generations they will, I believe, be one of the great powers of the world. For in Africa the Englishman does what he does in Britain, forsakes his farm for the city, where there is more life, and more money to be made.

A well-known South African statesman writes to me:—

‘We see it’ (*i.e.* the effect produced upon English people by the deterioration of our agriculture) ‘in the Colonies, where it is hard indeed to get an Englishman to settle on the ground, . . . even well-paid occupations cannot stem the tide that sets to the hideous collections of men they call cities. What will be the end? In a sense you may see the beginning of that end in this war: a war of city-folk against country-folk who are fortunately only a handful! You see it in the gradual domination of capital which has succeeded to the old landed privilege,’—and so forth.

The ‘domination of capital,’ the love of money and what it will bring, that is the root of the matter at home and abroad, not in one class but in all. To get more money and more pleasure the English settler and his wife leave their land in South Africa and betake themselves to Johannesburg, and to get more money and more pleasure the English labourer and his wife lock their cottage door and betake themselves to the slums of London.

I have now tried to set forth generally what has been already chronicled in much detail in these volumes, that the agricultural interests in England are in no flourishing condition. I have pointed out that, chiefly owing to the low wage which is all that the land can pay them and their lack of prospects, the labouring classes are in great numbers deserting the country for the towns, where they hope, often vainly enough, to better their fortunes. I have shown also in these pages that the race of yeomen is becoming extinct,

and that of the owners of land very much impoverished. Further I have drawn the conclusion that these unnatural developments are of most evil omen for the welfare of our Country, and have ventured to suggest several remedies (outside of Protection which I look upon as impracticable), whereby they may be, if not arrested, at the least palliated. Can this be done? I can only answer that I think so—that at least as much has been done in other lands.

Let us take the case of Denmark, which possesses, I believe, no advantage over England in soil or climate, but which has the enormous advantage of a Government sympathetic to agriculture. There, as a result of legislation whereby they have been encouraged, of loans granted by Government, and of the sale under the Act of 1849 of all land owned by the State, Universities, and other public Institutions to the tenants, more than 66 per cent. of the total cultivated area of Denmark is, I am informed, at present held in freehold by yeomen, who farm an average of ninety-three acres of land per head. Further in 1899 an Act, I understand, was passed by which the State is empowered to grant loans enabling agricultural labourers to acquire allotments. I think I am right in saying that the result of these and of similar measures is that the population of Denmark, which, like those of other Countries, was crowding into the cities, is now in large numbers returning to the land.

In June 1901 a deputation of Suffolk farmers visited Denmark. In their report to the East Suffolk county Council they say, speaking of the Danish farmer: 'The great advantage that he possesses is in the sympathy of the Government. Loans, without interest, towards bringing waste lands into cultivation, and generally small rates of interest, repaid by instalments, towards the improvement of land and agricultural buildings; and low rates of freight and carriage of agricultural produce from Denmark to England.'

In their General Conclusions they add: 'A great deal of their' (*i.e.* the Danish farmers) 'success may be attributed, not only to their system of co-operation and good means of

education, but also to the fact that they own the land they occupy, to the assistance they receive from Government, as well as to the absence of rabbits and vermin.' The deputation also points out 'that the expense of farming in Denmark appeared to be, with the exception of State aid, quite as high as, or higher than in Suffolk. The taxes and rent charge for the class of land in question were about the same as in East Anglia, but labour, implements, &c were dearer, but against this must be set the fact that the Danish farmer appeared to be satisfied with a much simpler and more frugal mode of life than is common here.'

Now let us glance at the result of this Government sympathy and help, and of the system of co-operation which it seems to have forwarded in every possible way. I go for my facts to an address delivered by Herr M. P. Blym, a member of the Danish Parliament.

The following table gives a comparative statement of the enormous increase in the exports of Denmark since 1876.

—	Pigs and Bacon	Butter	Eggs	Total
	£	£	£	£
1876-80 .	1,062,000	1,116,000	66,000	2,244,000
1881-85 .	1,539,000	1,255,000	144,000	2,938,000
1886-90 .	1,538,000	2,411,000	284,000	4,233,000
1891-95 .	2,321,000	3,900,000	383,000	6,604,000
1896 . .	2,322,000	4,600,000	506,000	7,428,000
1897 . .	2,965,000	5,005,000	650,000	8,620,000
1898 . .	2,623,000	5,400,000	700,000	8,723,000
1899 . .	2,966,000	6,050,000	880,000	9,876,000
1900 . .	3,223,000	6,084,000	922,000	10,229,000

Herr Blym points out, further, that between 1876 and 1900 the exportation value of bacon went up 203 per cent., of butter 445 per cent., of eggs 1,300 per cent., and so on. Also he says—

The co-operative system has not only increased the amount, but also the quality. Second and third class butter does not exist in this country any longer. The cause is that the butter made by the peasants brought only half as much as the butter produced by the larger estates. The butter made by the co-operative dairies

now stands $1\frac{1}{2}$ point higher than that made by the estates, according to the latest tests made in the royal laboratory

They are now, like the peasants, compelled to join the co-operative dairies in order to compete with the market

The co-operative system also brings large and small farmers together, thereby increasing the yield of the soil.

In a social respect it has the greatest signification

It is therefore no wonder that the Danish farmer places his reliance for the future on the co-operative system.

It is useless to take up space commenting on such facts as these. They tell their own story. Why, I would ask, cannot the same or more be done in England, where we have at least equal advantages? I know well that it would be done if only our Governments could be brought to understand the vast importance of the issues and to put their hands to the plough in earnest. English agriculture is not played out, but if it is to succeed under the new conditions that have arisen its system must be changed. There must be more small farmers, more small owners of land, and above everything, cheaper carriage and more co-operation; all of which needs, in my view, can only be put in the way of accomplishment by State example and encouragement.

Surely I have succeeded in showing to any unprejudiced reader that the question is of enormous importance. After all Great Britain is the hub and focus of her world-wide power, and if our gigantic empire is to be sustained and kept from falling to pieces of its own weight, the home energy, that is as steam to the engine, must be sustained also. How can this be done if our population is allowed to deteriorate, and how can such deterioration be prevented if that population continues to desert the land and to crowd into cities? How, to ask a last question, can this migration be prevented in face of our Free Trade system, a factor that in my view must continue to dominate the situation, except by interesting its children sufficiently in the land of England to induce them there to bide and multiply?

Feudal systems and feudal ideas have had their reign and

are outworn. Or rather the system is worn out, but the ideas still linger. Do we not see proof of this in such a document even as the will of that great man, Cecil Rhodes? In bequeathing his Dalham Hall estate in Cambridgeshire he says. 'My experience is that one of the things making for the strength of England is the ownership of country estates which could maintain the dignity and comfort of the head of the family' And again 'Whereas I humbly believe that one of the secrets of England's strength has been the existence of a class termed "the country landlords," *who devote their efforts to the maintenance of those on their own property.*' This is the feudal idea, and especially that of members of country families who have gone abroad in their youth. But I maintain that it is erroneous, that it does not show a just appreciation of the needs and conditions of the time. This, indeed, in the present instance, is proved by the fact that the testator proceeds to make arrangements which must be called highly artificial, to ensure its fulfilment in the case of his own landed property.

I maintain also that what is necessary now is not so much to support 'the dignity and comfort' of the heads of a few country families, which, in the vast majority of instances, can be done only by providing them with extraneous wealth, but rather the dignity and comfort of the heads of hundreds or thousands of small country owners or occupiers. I maintain still further that the mission of landlords is not merely to 'devote their efforts to the maintenance of those on their own property,' I presume by charity or by finding them employment for which the property cannot pay—that is, out of private wealth.

The land of a country does not exist solely for the pleasure of the rich and the advantage of their salaried dependents; therefore this is an evil system which in my view must tend to promote the ferocious mendicancy, public or private, covert or ostensible, direct or indirect, that is one of the features of the age. Rather is it the true mission of landowners to strive to enable those upon

their estates, to maintain *themselves* out of the fruits of their *own* honourable exertions. Indeed if the national prosperity is to be kept up it would seem most desirable that this system should be followed on the largest possible scale, lest at last our fate should be that of Rome or of the Phœnicians.

Let our past, and even our present abundance be admitted, whether or no its full measure will endure is another question. Once we had almost a monopoly of trade and manufactures. Have we that monopoly to-day, who are doomed continually to hammer at the shut doors of the world's markets while our own stand open to the world? Who must meet also in America a rivalry which, after all, is that of youth with age, a contest whereof the end may be foreseen. Is it not admitted that our absolute commercial superiority is melting before our eyes? And if it goes, if even half of it goes, what then? What have we to fall back upon except our home markets and our home land—the land that made us in the beginning and that, to a far greater extent than we now think possible, may still be called upon to support us in the end?

Surely these questions connected with agriculture, British land and its depopulation, however persistently it may suit politicians to ignore them, and however little the mass of city-dwellers may understand or care about them, are, in fact, among the most important, if not, as I myself believe, absolutely the most important which confront our generation. Still they are left almost out of the account, although the agricultural interest remains individually, I believe, the greatest in the nation, if the most voiceless and, on account of the unfortunate divisions of the classes concerned, politically the most helpless. For in this matter Governments look to the needs, wishes, and advantage of those from whom they derive their chief support, the dwellers in the cities.

Here I conclude my comments upon a subject that, to

say nothing of much previous study and preparation, for two years past has occupied all my time and mind. In so doing I wish to state once more, as clearly as I can, my sincere conviction that one of the first objects of the rulers of Great Britain should be to promote the true welfare and prosperity of British land in every just and reasonable way, and to multiply the homes thereon. Indeed I am persuaded that if our Country is to decline from its present high position the principal cause of its fall will be our national neglect to maintain the population on the land. If high civilisation necessitates a flight from the villages, then it is of a truth that broad road which leads to the destruction of advanced peoples. I am sure that one of the worst fates which can befall England is that her land should become either a plaything or a waste, and that her greatest safeguard lies in the re-creation of a yeoman class, rooted in the soil and supported by the soil.

I know I have written with earnestness, and I trust that this may be forgiven me in an age which, with or without justice, is apt to confound earnestness and folly. I have written earnestly because I feel earnestly, although I know also that on this account some may set me down as a partisan of difficult and troublesome reform. Yet I have striven to treat my task in a temperate and impartial spirit, to weigh and sift the evidence and to record nothing that I did not believe to be the truth. I am well aware however of the frailty of individual judgment, and that strong convictions may prejudice the most honest mind. Therefore I wish to point out that the reader should seek light in the views of the great cloud of witnesses which I have recorded, rather than in the opinions of a single writer; that, however carefully considered, and deliberate, may yet in some particulars be erroneous or misleading. To these I refer him, since it is to those judgments and facts, patiently collected from scores of experts and practitioners of agriculture throughout England, and, as I believe, accurately expressed, that I look to

give my work the most of such permanent value as it may possess.

Perhaps it is too much to hope that my humble and unaided efforts will influence those who have power so to do, to stir in these grave matters before time takes away their opportunity. At least I have done my best and doubtless things will go as they are fated. I feel that the work might have been better and more completely executed. Still I cease my labours with a sense of gratitude, and not without a measure of pride, in that I have been able to accomplish even so much of my original conception. My heartfelt hope, moreover, is that in this way or the other, now or in future time, my work may benefit, to however small an extent, the Country whose welfare I so earnestly desire, and to whose contemporary records I add this page.

FINIS.

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